

ACTING TO ACT: A YOUTH-CENTERED, DRAMA-INFUSED PARADIGM OF
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION THAT REFLECTS SCRIPTURE
AND IGNITES EMANCIPATORY LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

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This project proposes a model of Christian education that employs Scripture-based drama to attract, educate, transform, and retain youth at Immanuel Bethel United Church of Christ, a Euro-American church located in an African-American community. Immanuel Bethel UCC finds itself needing to attract youth to carry on the transformative work of the church. Since youth were included regularly in worship in relevant, appealing, and affirmative ways, the results were that they owned their membership and remained. The methodology consisted of pre- and post-surveys, biblical narratives transposed into plays, and six sessions during which these narratives were taught, executed, and fully examined.

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The thought of pursuing a Doctorate Degree is one which Harriet has pondered for many years. Having earned Master's Degrees in the Performing Arts, Divinity, and Education Administration left her struggling about which field she would pursue; being passionate about them all. This degree is a culmination of those three fields and solidifies Harriet's involvement in them all. Therefore, Harriet has several people to thank.

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To her big sister, Debra Prioleau Williams Blount—Look at what God did!

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To my spiritual mentor, Rev. Dr. Khani Hawkins Bell—I have so much to thank you for. I praise God for you. Your invitation to me to join the Immanuel Bethel family as their youth Pastor was God's immediate answer to my prayer at that ordination that afternoon, as I told God that I was ready to serve in any capacity. That moment was the

beginning of my formal ministerial call, and the beginning of this wonderful project. I am so grateful to God for you and the role God has given you in my life.

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To United Theological Seminary—thank you! Thank you for accepting me into your auspicious doctoral program. Thank you for housing such a program that provides for the in-depth process of examination of oneself and one’s context to derive and create a project that fulfills the needs of both the context and the researcher. You have given me an understanding of ministry from a totally different, yet clearer perspective. I am both humbled and proud to say that I am a UTS Graduate.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated foremost to Immanuel Bethel United Church of Christ, who helped me to develop a creative way to reach out to youth and give them a place in worship in which they will be deemed valuable, learn the word of God, and minister to others. It is also dedicated to churches everywhere that find themselves facing the dilemma of finding a way to attract, educate, transform, and retain youth.

Shrink not from your heritage by holding back when your *time* comes to *act*—for to *act* is to claim your true sonship [daughtership].

—Howard Thurman, *The Inward Journey*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASSO	ASSOCIATION
CSA	CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL OF ANTHROPOLOGY
IBUCC	IMMANUEL BETHEL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
KJV	KING JAMES VERSION
NIV	NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION
NLT	NEW LIVING TRANSLATION
NRSV	NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION
UCC	UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

If one approaches this project in search of a resource for implementing an innovative approach to Christian education, then one will find such. If one approaches this project in search of a creative way to attract and challenge the youth of today by shedding light on the relevance of the word of God to their lives, while giving them a place in worship that deems them valuable, again one would find it. If one is looking for a way to enhance any worship service without hype or gimmicks, then this project is the resource. If the quest is for a way to bring scriptures to life without dumbing them down, then *Acting to Act: A Youth-centered, Drama-infused Paradigm of Christian Education that Reflects Scripture and Ignites Emancipatory Learning*, is the resource that informs such an effort. In fact, this project boasts to present a holistic approach to ministry to all stakeholders of the church today—the youth, the adult congregants, the pastor, and the community.

There is a great need to minister to youth in worship in ways that matter—ways in which they can see relativity in their everyday lives. While many youth are familiar with the beliefs of their churches of choice, and serve as youth disciples by convincing their peers to go to church and get involved with their auspicious youth programs, many walk away without substance. In fact, many are walking away, never to return. Studies have

shown that in 2007, seventy percent of youth left their churches after high school graduation, with thirty-five percent of them never returning.¹

Thus, it seems that while churches might be successful in attracting youth, their ability to retain them has proven to be a task accomplished by very few. This leads one to raise the question of motivation—are youth being pursued to increase immediate numbers for the youth's benefit or for the church's benefit? Actually, both parties will benefit, but only if the church's influence is long-lasting and, thus, retentive. Youth need not only to be attracted to the church, but their involvement in the church should be so impactful that it compels young people to thirst for more, and therefore, want to make being in church a lifelong goal/desire. When youth realize the benefits of not just going to church, but also of knowing God, their lives change. It is then that the church benefit as well.

Knowing the word of God is the first and most significant step in developing that relationship with God that is everlasting. Unfortunately, most of our youth are unfamiliar with the actual content and teaching of the Bible. Based upon statistics from the 2009 annual report of the United States Department of Juvenile Justice, it is fair to assert that many of today's youth have either little knowledge of or little regard for the word of God. They appear to be operating either uninformed or oblivious to the Bible's teachings. In 2007, the number of juvenile crime/arrests was 2,180,500; a rate of fifteen percent.² Twenty-eight percent of these were youth under fifteen years old, and twenty-nine

¹Cathy Lynn Grossman, "Young Adults Aren't Sticking with Church," *USATODAY.com*, April 6, 2007. http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2007-08-06-church-dropouts_N.htm (accessed January 22, 2011).

²U.S. Department of Justice: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Juvenile Arrests 2007*, by Charles Puzzanchera, (April 2009). <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/225344pdf> (accessed January 22, 2011).

percent were female.³ These numbers are alarming. Even more alarming is the fact that in 2007, ten percent of all murder victims were under the age of eighteen.⁴ Violent crimes in 2007 increased by three percent;⁵ and crimes for gain of material goods—burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft rose four percent. In 2007, African-American youth accounted for only seventeen percent of the United States population. Astoundingly, however, they accounted for fifty-one percent of the arrests for violent crimes by juveniles, and thirty-two percent of arrests for property crimes.

In 2006, the Chicago Police asserted their belief that the church is the key to lowering its murder rate, and they reached out to churches in partnership to develop ways of combating violence.⁶ Thus, the questions—when youth get to church, what will they do? What will they learn? What will keep them there?

Youth must be taught the word of God, unfiltered, and un-watered down. Pastor David Platt, of the Church at Brooke Hills in Birmingham, Alabama states that “People need to hear the Gospel as it is presented biblically.”⁷ This includes the youth. If these crime-committing juveniles were fed the word of God, then they would not have committed those offenses. If they understood Proverbs 22:1, that instructs “A good name

³U.S. Department of Justice: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, “Juvenile Arrests 2007.”

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶From News Services, “Schools, Churches Key to Dropping Murder Rate,” Chicago Tribune January 2, 2006. http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2006-01-02/news/0601030159_1_antiviolence-murder-rate-gang (accessed January 22, 2011).

⁷Lillian Kwon, “Is the Church Dying in America’s Bible Belt?” ChristianToday.com, April 28, 2010. <http://christiantoday.com/article/is.the.church.dying.in.americas.bible.belt/25802.htm> (accessed January 22, 2011).

is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold,”⁸ or “You should not set your desire on anything that belongs to your neighbor,”⁹ then they might have thought twice. Society is calling for help with our youth in local communities or calling on the church for help. The church must design a strategy that will reach the youth, and not only attract them to church, but also retain them in the church. The youth are the ones who must carry the church forward. If they are absent, in jail, or dead, then they cannot do that.

The problem specific to this project is this--Immanuel Bethel needs youth. It is a predominantly Euro-American church sitting in the heart of the predominantly African - American suburb of Dolton, Illinois. While the church is one that describes its character as *family-like*, *friendly*, and *welcoming*, it also deems itself to be on the traditional end of the religious spectrum. Its worship services are Bible-adherent and liturgy-driven. Customs such as the ringing of bells and the singing of hymns and anthems comprise its weekly worship service. There are no uses of instruments other than the organ and piano (never at the same time). Because of the senior ages of most of its members, one of the primary concerns is that of church mortality. They are fully aware of their need for youth and are open to implementing creative strategies to attract them. The key is providing them with meaningful ministry onto which they can hold until they take ownership of their membership and remain in membership with the church. The difficulty of this task arises in the type of worship services that Immanuel Bethel conducts, and whether it accommodates the interests of the African-American community that surrounds it. Each summer the church hosts an elaborate week-long Vacation Bible School program that

⁸Prv 22:1 (NRSV).

⁹Dt 5:21b (NIV).

attracts between forty and fifty participants from the neighborhood. However, when the program is gone, the students are also gone. The retention of youth has been a major problem.

This project will show that there indeed is a way to attract and retain youth at Immanuel Bethel and any church without severely altering the worship service, while simultaneously educating both adults and youth, alike. It is a Christian Education model that infuses dramatization of the week's Scripture into worship. It includes aspects of rehearsal and study through which the youth derive cognition regarding Bible content, meaning, and its life-applicability. It includes an application dimension in which the youth perform the dramatization before the congregation. Scripts are drafted in collaboration with the sermon topics; this requires close collaboration with the Pastor. It concludes with a Critical Analysis dimension, during which elements of the dramatization are criticized by the actors as well as congregants or contextual associates.

This project adheres to the church's preferences of Bible-based worship, for the plays are based strictly upon the word of God. If youth are taught the word of God, then their decisions will be impacted and rendered toward the godly realm. If they are given a space in the church and worship in which they are deemed valuable, then they are more likely to remain there. If they are taught how the Bible applies to their lives, then they will continue to rely upon it when confronted with their everyday situations. In this project, all of these tasks are carried out. This paper will show in detail, how so and give the results of their implementation.

While media is being infused in worship services today on a rather expansive scale, few modes are being employed using the technique presented in this project—that

of the infusion of drama. This project is straightforward with few frills, outside of costuming and set design. Today the variety of available curriculum resources in Christian Education assert predominate themes. However, this project asserts Biblical narratives transposed into plays. This is significant because the focus remains on the pericope that is the day's emphasis. It merely presents the scripture through another mode of communication. It asserts a second modality of learning of the Scriptures for those who are visual learners. The Bible-adhering nature of this project allows it to be woven into any worship service and enhance it. It generates the participation of worshipers, adults and youth alike. The worshipers are drawn in as they attempt to gain clarity from the scripture that they just heard read to them. The youth look inward to project the meaning they have derived from the scripture via the study /rehearsal session held prior to its presentation. Through participation in this project, both youth and adult participants speak of transformations that they have experienced merely as a result of studying God's word. Teenagers gave their lives to God and were baptized at the end of the project.

This paper is broken into six chapters. Chapter One has three components—the *Ministry Focus* (in which information detailing the researcher's person and context of ministry are given), the *Conjunction of Information* (in which the synergism between the researcher and her context is described), and the *Ministry Focus and Peer Group* (in which the alignment of the project to the group's focus is carried out).

Chapter Two, entitled, *The State of the Art in This Ministry Model*, highlights the major supporting sources of this work. Chapter Three contains the biblical, theological, and historical foundations of the project. Biblically, the researcher argues that inasmuch

as other art forms such as song dance, monologue, poetry, and instrumentation, are depicted throughout the biblical narratives during times of celebration, praise, lament, worship, triumph, defeat, and more; the word, *drama*, while not mentioned in the Bible, categorizes as a viable art form, and therefore, can be employed as a method of Christian education in worship. Historically, the researcher examines the evolution of theater and its roles in Christianity from antiquity to the present. Theologically, the researcher advocates for the education of youth on biblical content as a deterrent from inappropriate actions and decisions, as she examines their scientific incapability to make sound judgments due to incomplete brain formation. Chapter Four describes the methodology employed, which consists of the exploratory sequential technique using the mixed-methods approach. Chapter Five gives an exhaustive account of the project's implementation. Finally, Chapter Six, *Reflection, Summary, and Conclusion*, allows the researcher to share her findings and draw conclusions, while reflecting on these results and any changes she would make.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

The value of Christian Education, as it applies to the entire makeup of the church, is underestimated by many in churches today. Christian Education undergirds every other ministry of the church, as it serves as the artery through which information necessary for increased faith-formation is transported. The focus group, *Christian Education and Urban Ministry Development*, operates under the conviction that Christian Education is the contingent seed from which all other ministries and efforts emerge. In other words, everything practiced, preached, sung, read, taught, danced, donated, assisted, celebrated, and more needs to be informed by Christian Education.

The implementation of a Christian Education program and the dissemination of Christian information requires consideration of many factors, including methodology, accuracy, and content. This brings to the forefront the importance of wholistic Christian Education; i.e. content, pedagogy, and praxis. Churches must examine what it is they are seeking to teach relative to what they are already teaching. They must evaluate effectiveness as they consider the strategies they will employ by addressing the question, "Which strategies will best disseminate Christian information to the congregation?" As congregations differ, so must the curricula that they utilize; no single method of pedagogy is exhaustive. Christian Education programs need to address the modalities of

learning—kinesthetic, auditory, and visual if they hope to reach the diverse makeup of their congregations.

One of the primary foci of the group is the research of and exposure to teacher dynamics, specifically for the purpose of providing Christian Education. The exposure through the group's additional purported foci of research of congregations, communities, pedagogical practice, educator development, history, and the dynamics of urban policies, urban systems, and change, enables churches and individuals to develop a philosophy of Christian Education, which is also a component of the group.

This model applies the research attained through my participation in the Christian Education and Urban Ministry Development focus group. Elaine's philosophy, "Christian Education is the transference of the Christian experience between educator and learner in ways that reflect God's love for all and God's desire for justice for all," has compelled her to develop this project; *Acting to Act: A Youth-centered, Drama-infused Paradigm of Christian Education that Reflects scripture and Ignites Emancipatory Learning*. This project purports to serve as a tool for Christian Education by addressing the various learning modalities through the incorporation of dramatic presentations during worship. It aims to transform all participants—educator and learner, actor and audience. Its curriculum is composed of Biblical content, and thus will equip its participants with Christian information as its core. It is her belief that its employment as a Christian Education tool will impact positively the faith community at Immanuel Bethel United Church of Christ, and the global community of faith.

Spiritual Autobiography

The researcher was born, Harriet Elaine Joyner on July 22, 1961, in Columbia, South Carolina. Her family's life was anything but simple. She was the second of six siblings whose births occurred in two phases. In the first phase, her mother, a single parent, had three kids, each three years apart. While her older sister had a different father, her younger brother and she had the same dad. The second phase developed as a result of the marriage between Elaine's mother and stepfather. Elaine's mother had children, and William, her stepfather had children; but they did not have any children together; thus, the second set of siblings.

While Elaine cannot pinpoint the specific age at which church first became important to her, she can pinpoint an era when dressing up and going to church with her mother, sister, and aunts was special. She can remember when getting a new dress for Easter and wearing an Easter bonnet with her own little matching purse was special. Going next door to her grandmother's house with her big sister to both drop off her little brother and pick up her aunts, who were two years her senior and her junior, was special. Modeling her new outfits for her grandmother was special, even if she was told repeatedly that her grandmother did not know why her mother put those loud colors of yellow and/or pink on her. Walking around to the church early with other people in the neighborhood in an attempt to get a good seat was special. She cannot recall specifically whether she was indeed a member of the familiar *Christmas, Mother's Day, and Easter* denomination, but the more she attempts to recall the specifics, the more she is convinced that she probably was; it just all was so special.

Her mother gave them money to put into church; and yes, Elaine did what just about every other child she knew did—held onto the money, and spent it at the Baxley Food Store buying candy afterwards. Sometimes, as an added bonus, her mother let them go to the movies with her aunts and one of her older uncles to watch some horribly frightening movies after church. She was happy to the point of inexplicability. These special Sundays were days of church, family and love; and she loved her mother for them.

There was something intriguing about the New Ebenezer Baptist Church in Columbia, South Carolina. It was something that made Elaine well up with warmth and curiosity every time she went. She does not believe that it was the mean usher-lady who pulled all the kids' ears who talked during the service, for she was scared to death of her. She does not believe it was the pseudo-opera-singing lady who led "Oh, How I Love Jesus" with such hilarious fervor every time the choir sang. Instead, she believes that it was somehow the talk of these mysterious beings called *God* and *Jesus*, about whom the preacher spoke with overwhelming conviction.

She believes that perhaps it may have been the pain and sadness emoted as this really nice and pretty lady sang "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord" during the Easter season. It may even have been the amazing faith displayed through one woman's distress at the loss of her mother as she sang "Surely, God is Able"¹ to the congregation through her shouts and tears. Elaine wondered who this *God* was who was so able, and who could be so many things. She was intrigued by this being that no one could see, but about whom everyone spoke so favorably. She could not put her finger on

¹See Appendix K.

it, but there was something going on at that church and she was glad that her mom took her.

When Elaine was around seven years old, her mother told them that they were moving from the three-room shack with a tin roof around the corner from the church to a brand new house in a brand new neighborhood in the suburbs. They would have their own beds and a big yard in which to play. They would meet new friends. Elaine remembers the joy her big sister expressed at the idea. Boy was she ready to go! She was tired of having to share a bed with Elaine every night. The move to new beginnings sounded good to her. However, for Elaine, the news was not so welcoming. While the thought of moving into a new house in which no one else had ever lived and in which there would be no more rats and roaches was exciting, and the idea of meeting new friends peaked her interest, Elaine recalls having one main concern—whether or not they were still going to be going to church.

When Elaine asked her mother if they could still go, her mother told her that they would be living too far away from the church and that they probably would not be going. Elaine was quite disappointed. She loved New Ebenezer. She loved hearing about God. She then asked her mother if she could still go. She wanted to know if she could catch the bus by herself and go. Her mother told her that she could and told her that she would tell her how to do it. So at the age of nine, the house was finished. They moved in and began their new lives.

After the passage of a series of Sundays, Elaine told her mother she was ready to go to church by herself, and asked her mother to tell her what to do. She had rode the bus with her mother before, so the experience itself was not entirely foreign. However, going

it alone was completely new. Her mother gave her step-by-step instructions on how to know where to get off and instructed her to go to her grandmother's house after church.

When Sunday came, Elaine got dressed, got the bus fare from her mother and a dollar to put in church and was on her way. She walked around the corner and up the hill to the bus stop. She got on the bus, did what her mother instructed, and in about a half an hour, she was off the bus heading for the church. She had no fear at the time because she was going to God's house. She arrived, found herself a seat in the middle, and listened as stories, testimonies, songs, prayers, and sermons referred to these God and Jesus beings, which were so amazing and so dependable for so many people. Afterwards, she went to her grandmother's house as instructed. She did this week after week, until one week her mother told her that she did not have the money to give to her every week. Her mother told her that she would have to skip some weeks and that her mother would give her money when she had it, which amounted to approximately once-a-month.

Elaine longed for that one Sunday a month to come in order that she might go to New Ebenezer Baptist Church. She continued to go, and watch, and absorb as the deacons prayed, the choir sang, and the preacher tuned it up and whooped like there was no tomorrow. She watched as the women shouted and fainted, prompting the ushers to shield them, fan them, and revived them by holding that little piece of candy-looking ammonia under their noses. She wondered with amazement who was this God?

One Sunday, at the end of one of her Pastor's euphoric sermonic presentation, the song, "Come to Jesus," was being sung as the invitation was being offered. "Is there anybody out there who wants to give your life to Christ right now?" he asked. "Come on. He loves you. He died for your sins, that you might live again. Won't you come? God

loves you. It doesn't matter what you have done. He'll welcome you today. He won't turn his back on you. He's all you'll ever need. Won't you come?"

Elaine pondered the invitation, "I want to know this God. He is so amazing. Reverend says he loves me. Even if I mess up, he loves me. So many of the people at New Ebenezer knew him, so many people here love him. I want to know him, too. I'm going. I'm going to give my life over to him." She arose from her seat and walked down the aisle to The Pastor. I want to join the church. She heard lots of Amen's and applauses, but had no clue what they meant. They deacons took her name, presented her as a candidate for baptism, and told her that baptism would be the following Sunday at 5:00 p.m. She ran home to tell her grandmother, who called and told her mother. The following Sunday, she was baptized in the presence of her mother, grandmother, older sister and baby brother, and became a member of God's house and God's family. That meant something, although she was still unsure what it was.

By the time she had reached the ninth grade, she was going to church more frequently, for her mom had begun to give her an allowance of \$10.00 per month, and she used part of it to take the bus to church. When she arrived at 10:30 each Sunday morning, she noticed that there were children already there, lots of them. She often wondered why so many of them were there all the time.

One Sunday she had to use the restroom, which was located downstairs. When she got downstairs, she saw lots of children, some young, some older. The little ones were running around and the bigger ones were eating cookies and talking. While in the restroom, she asked one girl what was going on down there. The girl told her that they had just finished Sunday school. Elaine knew nothing about this Sunday school—what

they did there, or whether she was supposed to go. She did not know if they would even let her in; so she simply went back upstairs and joined the adults.

Elaine began to get involved in various activities at school. She made good grades because she wanted to be like the other children and not looked down upon by anyone. She began to make even more friends, different friends than before. She began receiving invitations to parties, to which, much to her repeated disappointment, she was not allowed to go. The more Elaine began to do at school, the less time she believed she had to do things at home. Thus, friction between her and her mother was born.

It saddens Elaine that whenever she is asked to name the person who has served as a role model for her, she cannot come up with a single name. She could not name any one person to whom she looked up and wanted to emulate, or who took her by the hand and showed her life's way. She had winged it as best she could. She observed others, noting the good, and decided to emulate the good.

Elaine got involved in various activities at school. She made good grades because she wanted to be like the other children and not looked down upon by anyone. She wanted to be accepted among the better of the bunch. She tried out for the cheerleading squad and made it. She gave it all she had and she was good. She was told often that people loved her spirit. She loved cheering! Elaine began to make even more friends, different friends than before. She began receiving invitations to parties, to which, much to her repeated disappointment, she was not allowed to go. She could not believe that her mother was not proud of the path that her life was taking. Instead of guidance from her mom, Elaine received only more restrictions.

Elaine now believes that her life would have been so much different had one adult stepped in and given her guidance. However, there was not any one person who seemed to care enough. While there was not any one person, there were three major influential factors that have driven her throughout her life—her circumstance of poverty, the notion of *better*, and her belief in God's love for her.

As Elaine reached her mid-twenties, God continued to show her how much God loved her and how real God was. One weekend she was traveling to Brunswick, Georgia, to visit a friend who was in training to become an agent with the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms division of the United States Government. It was a beautiful sunny afternoon as she drove along her four-hour journey. All of a sudden, the sky grew very dark. Elaine noticed that cars were pulling over on the highway to wait out the storm. Being young, anxious, ambitious, and adventurous, she decided to continue on through the rain. What she had not anticipated was the severity of the storm and the rapidness of its onset.

The sky grew black. The thunder rolled and the lightning flashed. The rain fell so hard that Elaine could not see beyond the windshield. It was as if a black sheet was thrown over the glass. Elaine became afraid. She wanted to pull over, but she could not see to do so. Besides, cars had already begun to pull over further back, so the medians had to have been filled with cars by then. She could not stop where she was for fear of someone hitting her from behind. She began to cry. "God, I'm scared! Help me, I'm scared!"

To her immediate surprise, Elaine saw a person, a figure, who she believed to have been Jesus, standing between the rain and the windshield. He was motioning to her with both of his hands, and she could hear him telling her to "Come on. Come on," as if

she was a little baby being ushered into the arms of her mother. Still weeping, she kept her eyes on him. She had both hands on the steering wheel and responded with, "I'm coming! I'm holding on! I'm coming!"

In an instant she saw Jesus rise out of sight. The sun shone bright as if there had never been a storm. Elaine looked left and right. She looked behind her. Everything was normal; there was no hint of a storm. She thought for a moment and all she could say was, "Wow!" God had pulled her through a storm literally. God had stepped in right on time literally. The Lord had heard and answered her cry literally. Her faith in and her relationship with the Lord grew, and from that moment on Elaine has known that she has had nothing to fear.

God was with her. God would take care of her. Elaine was now sure of these things. All she had to do was ask, and God would respond. She had been in and out of her mother's house. After having worked her first year as a teacher, she moved back home because she was going to get married and needed to save her money for a wedding. However, the relationship dissolved after a year and the marriage was called off. The break-up led her to a church that most of colleagues from the university attended. She had sung in the choir in college and she needed to hear some gospel. She found her way to choir rehearsal one night and just sat there and cried. The minister of music, her friend, invited her to join the choir. She attended a few of their rehearsals and subsequently joined the choir.

While she enjoyed being in the choir and her new church life, Elaine still had a longing to perform. She decided that this was a good time for her to pursue her desired career in performing. She wanted to sing, perform, and be a star, but she needed to be in a

place that provided a platform for its possibility--Chicago, Los Angeles, or New York. She did not want to just leave without any means or source of income, though. She pondered on how to do it. She resolved to go back to school. She could go away for a while and get a Masters degree. She applied to schools in the Midwest and received a full fellowship to the University of Illinois at Chicago to pursue a Masters of Arts Degree in the Performing Arts. Within three months she was gone. The plan was for her to complete the one-year program and return home.

Elaine joined Trinity United Church of Christ. She attended a women's revival, at which Reverend Vashti McKenzie was the preacher. She preached on confronting our weaknesses. It was at that revival that Elaine confronted the many bad decisions in her life that left her very regretful. It was then that she realized that God and only God would provide her with everything she needed, and the many things she had done in her quest to acquire things and to feel loved were not what she had needed at all. While in the past, Elaine accepted every word everyone else said about God as truth, she had finally reached the point at which she realized that she needed to stand on God's word and not anyone else's. She had accepted others' misinterpretations of the word of God and had been influenced negatively by them, but no more.

Elaine's relocation to Chicago moved her one step closer to doing that which she loved most in the world—singing. She was going to be a star, and Chicago was just a mere stepping stone. Ultimately, she planned to go to Los Angeles, where she would make it big. Chicago had the Oprah show and if she did well, then she probably would end up on Oprah's show before moving to the West coast. She performed in a couple of

plays while attending the university and was able to sing a bit. She went on to land a role in “God’s Trombones” at Chicago’s ETA Theatre.

Elaine eventually married a man, whom she had encountered after doing a play at ETA, and met formally at church. They dated for four years prior to their marriage. They had what she thought was a happy marriage. However, what she did not realize was that the spirit of *in-law rivalry* was alive and well. Her mother-in-law had it in for her. Her mother-in-law wanted whatever Elaine received from her husband; she wanted to go wherever they went, whether it was out of town, out of state, or out of the country. If they went to dinner, Mother-in-Law wanted dessert. It mattered not what it was, Mother-in-Law wanted to be included. As time went by, their marriage fizzled because he could not resolve the imposition his mother placed on the relationship. Elaine was very hurt by this. It was such a painful ending.

After having been bitten by the acting bug, Elaine networked. She began to sing at various *Open Mike Nights* throughout the city. She sang at night clubs and comedy clubs. Throughout the year, she played in one more show at the theater. The following summer, she landed a role in an independent film as a singer. She won a beauty pageant for a local night club and participated in the biggest African American parade in the country. She even met a record producer and sang lead on one of his tracks. Elaine was on her way.

One night while singing at a night club, she met the lead singer of a very popular African-American band. After giving her a huge tip, he invited her to go sing in the band with some ladies and himself. He took her to one of their gigs and she fell in love with what she saw. The party was a corporate event with elaborate decorations, gift bags, and auctions; the works! The band was comprised of twelve instruments, with a lead singer

and three female singers, who also sang solos. Elaine was so excited that she cried and prayed and thanked God for the blessing, in advance.

She was hired and performed at many of the major downtown hotels, restaurants, and suburban country clubs. Elaine had never seen such lavish decorations, furnishings, and floral arrangements. There was a green room at every event for the band with full meals and drinks; and the pay was amazing! Elaine sang solos with the band. Oftentimes, upon completion, she received standing ovations from the audiences and even flowers. She could not have been happier. She paraded downtown Chicago every weekend, with a suitcase full of cosmetics, beautiful evening gowns, and beautiful high heels.

She played at Michael Jordan's birthday party, Hillary Clinton's birthday party, for several delegation parties for both the Democratic and Republican conventions, and even played in Las Vegas for New Year's Eve three years in a row. It was surreal. She was so happy. She was so proud to be a member of such a distinguished band. She was on her way to stardom. She always remembered to thank God for her blessings in prayer and tithes.

All of a sudden, things began to change. Items from her make-up collection came up missing. She began feeling a bit of tension coming from the lead female of the group. The leader began telling her that she could not sing. Elaine knew that it was due to jealousy, but she continued on. The leader began to do and say things on the stage. While Elaine did not understand how she was allowed to do so, she never showed such unprofessional behavior on the stage.

Within weeks, she was fired from the job she loved, basically for reasons that were very subjective and unfair. She was devastated. Eventually accepting the end of her

band era as the will of God, she joined the choir at Trinity, for she believed that maybe God did not want her to do that type of singing anymore. She was going to sing for the Lord. Things were fine at first. She was given solos and sang to the glory of God.

Elaine remembers one of Pastor Jeremiah Wright's sermons entitled "When God Interrupts Your Plan." At the end of the sermon, the pastor invited those persons who believed that God interrupted their plan to come forward. Many people went to the altar. While she believed that God had indeed interrupted her plan of stardom, Elaine was not about to walk out before all of the people in the church. She was afraid of all the stares and snickers she was certain would occur. So she sat there. Pastor Wright prayed for the persons who came down. He then directed them to go to another room, where they would be given more information about ministry. Elaine wanted to join the group badly. As the last person in the group exited the church, Elaine just sat. She was shaking. She wanted to know more about ministry and she believed that God indeed had interrupted her plans. Thus, she heard her call to ministry.

Suddenly, she jumped off of the pew and ran out the side door to join the group. They planned a meeting in order that they may share all of the information about ministry. Elaine attended the meeting, which was hosted by Pastor Wright. He told of how the UCC was looking for persons to pastor in the Southeastern United States. He told of the seminary process. When he mentioned more schooling, Elaine knew immediately that she could be counted out because she was not going to do any more school in a while. She left the meeting with an, "Oh, well," attitude.

Suddenly things began to change in the choir. She felt bad vibes from the women in the Women's Chorus. They did not like her African attire for it was not African

enough. Granted, her first piece of African attire consisted of a halter dress with a twenty-four inch split on the side, she wore her other pieces very tastefully. She prayed for God to please tell her what to do with her life, for she had tried only to do what she loved and to utilize the gift that God gave her, and it was not working. Elaine prayed for God to say something and instruct her on how to proceed with her life.

When things started to go wrong with the choir, Elaine wrote Pastor Wright, and told him of the wrongdoings. Instead of his reprimand of the church choir (which she expected), he told Elaine emphatically that what she had gone through was simply God rattling her cage. He reminded her that she had answered a call to ministry a couple of years prior, but that he had not seen a single seminary application come across his desk. Elaine was astonished! God yet again had answered her prayers. God did not want her in the choir. God had called her to something higher, to do God's work; but she became afraid. She was not any minister. She could not be used to minister to anyone. That could not have been expected of her by God; but Elaine heard what he was saying. Thus, in answering her call, her journey began. She applied at one seminary only, the Chicago Theological Seminary. She was accepted and received her Master of Divinity degree four years later. This was a very humbling experience for Elaine because she simply did not believe she met the profile.

Elaine has evolved into someone who is quite in touch with her being spiritually, intellectually, socially, and familial. Spiritually, she continues to be one who loves God more than anything or anyone in the world. She knows that God's hand has been in everything she has been through in her life. She acknowledges that without God, she can

do nothing and therefore, does not try. She believes in the power of prayer and is thankful to all those who have prayed for her.

She believes in the love of God and is thankful to her first Pastor, Reverend William H. Fair, for telling her of God's love while she was young enough and thirsty enough to absorb it with the opened-mindedness of a child. She has evolved into one who believes it imperative to tell our youth of God's love, and to tell them as early as possible. As Youth Pastor at Immanuel Bethel United Church of Christ, she is able to do just that. God touched her at an early age and God's touch has been instrumental in her being.

As an Assistant Principal at Attucks Academy, she is able to minister to the youth who come to her for disciplinary reasons. Because of all that she has been through as one of the least of these, she is able to govern on her job with compassion, looking at underlying causes and addressing those, as well. Because of all that she has been through, she is non-judgmental; for she realizes that everyone has imperfections and makes mistakes.

Because of the circumstance of poverty under which she grew up, she has concern and compassion for those persons who are deemed lowest on the pole of socioeconomic stature. Because of her teachings at Trinity UCC, she remains cognizant of the history of racism and the likelihood that it will continue for a long time to come. She has gained strength and confidence in her status as an offspring of God, and thus her entitlement to justice. Therefore, she stands unafraid to speak out against racism and confront it when it confronts her.

Intellectually, she is an accomplished woman who believes that education is the key to success. She takes pride in her educational endeavors, and believes that there is

always room for more knowledge and that learning is ongoing. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education from the University of South Carolina. Her love of acting led her to relocate to Chicago upon the receipt of a fellowship from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and earn a Master of Arts in the Performing Arts. She answered God's call to ministry and attended the Chicago Theological Seminary where she earned her Master of Divinity degree, where she won the Garrett A. Morgan Preaching Award with the sermon, "How Do You Handle Questions?" This sermon was also published in the 2004 winter edition of the *African American Pulpit*. Elaine later earned her Master of Education degree in Education Administration. She is now seeking to fulfill her call to ministry by gaining expert knowledge of her discipline, the infusion of drama into worship through presentations of biblical content, as she pursues her Doctor of Ministry degree at United Theological Seminary.

Elaine has always been involved in the community. She is well-liked and well-respected in her home church, Trinity United Church of Christ (TUCC), where she sings solos with the Sanctuary Choir, has formerly sung with the TUCC Praise Team, served on the Board of Christian Education, and is InCare with the UCC denomination. She is highly-respected at the Immanuel Bethel United Church of Christ, where she serves as Youth Pastor.

Elaine is a member of several civic organizations, including the National Consortium of Black Women in Ministry, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., the National Area Alliance and Chicago Area Alliance of Black School Educators, the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association, and the Association of Supervision and

Curriculum Development. Through her membership in these organizations, she is able to obtain literature on various social topics, many of which pertain to youth.

Elaine is respected in her hometown of Columbia, South Carolina, as well, as she not only won The Miss Black Columbia and Miss Black South Carolina Pageants, and First Runner-up to Miss Black America and Miss Black USA Pageants; but in efforts to pass on the knowledge, experience, and confidence she gained, she produced and directed the "Miss Heart of Carolina Pageant" two years in a row for young girls and boys. She has evolved into one who believes that youth must be led and taught.

Elaine is respected by her family, as well. She is affectionately known as Aunt Elaine by her nieces and nephews, for whom she would lay down her life. She has no children of her own, and thus, likes to borrow those of her sister, brothers, and niece. She was known for spending time with the children. She had always driven around her younger brothers to see Christmas lights in the rich neighborhoods because that was where they seemed to be the most beautiful. She used to take her own brothers on day-long field trips to amusement parks, museums, and even bring them to Chicago with her. They knew her to be a leader with big ideas, who made them help her with bringing those ideas into reality. Because they had experienced being under her care, they now entrust their children to her care. They even suggest that Elaine take them even when unsolicited. Now she takes their children on summer vacations, to the zoo, movies, park and shopping.

Another way in which she has the respect of her family is one that means more to her than anything in the world. When she first told them about her call to ministry, her mother and sister were far from accepting. Her grandmother told her that God did not call

women. Her mother and sister told her that they did not want to even hear anything about it. Because they knew her faults and shortcomings, they believed that there was no way that God would call her to anything. She was hurt by this and rather suppressed answering her call. She could not tell her mother when she preached. She could not tell her mother when she won the preaching contest. She could not tell her mother that she had a sermon published. It hurt. When Harry died, she asked her stepmother if she could do his eulogy. With all of the persons present who did not believe in her ministry except her grandmother who had already passed on, she delivered what many called the “best eulogy they had ever heard.” William told her he did not believe it until he had seen it for himself; and her mother said that now she could rest easy because she knew that they would be put away well. Her best friend told Elaine that any church in Columbia would be honored to have her as a pastor, and asked if Elaine would do her eulogy if she died first. While technically Elaine did not need their approval to carry on the ministry of the Lord, she was blessed through receiving their blessings. She now moves with more fervor and conviction than ever.

Elaine has no biological children of her own, but she was blessed with the opportunity to raise a stepson whom she loved as if he were her very own. She believes that his age at the time of their encounter was what allowed her to have such a great impact on his life. She witnessed his growth from a rambunctious, self-centered, and spoiled little four-year-old boy into a gentle, caring Christian. She remembers having to take him into the restroom during a worship service at Trinity UCC (with his father’s permission) and applying with explanation and love the corporal discipline that she was destined to employ. She explained to him that having to repeat her directives to him was

unacceptable and so was his behavior. She told him that he was not going to be allowed to disrupt everyone's worship around him, for God would not be happy. She spanked him in the stall, and then took him out to altar call where he had to ask God for forgiveness. While she felt horrible about having to do that, she never once had to discipline him with her hand again. She prayed with him and his father every night he spent there, showing him how to pray. She led him to win Trinity's annual oratorical contest during African-American history month, reciting the anonymous "Epitaph to a Man." Through his participation in the contest, she taught him the value of working hard toward a goal, causing his biological mother to move from resistance to his mere participation in the contest to a verbal expression of gratitude for working with her child.

Elaine remembers when her stepson did not graduate on time from the eighth grade because he did not score high enough on the annual district-wide assessment. He had received tutoring from professional tutors for two years leading up to the test. Elaine, in addressing his disappointment, went to her job, found old practice tests and took home two copies of each. She asked him if he really wanted to graduate at the end of the summer session. He told her he did. She immediately shared her belief in the theological process of "telling God what you want, doing whatever is in your power to get it, and then trusting God to do the rest." Then they prayed. She made him tell God that he wanted to pass, and that he would study as hard as he could. She led him to ask God for God's help. She then gave him copies of the tests that she had gathered and kept a copy for herself. She assigned him ten to fifteen pages per day and directed him to call her at ten o'clock each night in order that they may review what he had done for the day. Every night they stayed on the phone for three to four hours, clarifying those things he did not

understand. He passed the test at the end of the summer. Their bond grew closer than ever. Elaine continued to treat her stepson with respect, listening to him and meeting him where he was. At twenty years old, her stepson remains grounded in his faith, so much so that he reminds listeners on his voicemail message that God loves them. Even though Elaine is divorced from his father, she shares a special relationship with her stepson. She praises God for that.

As the Associate Pastor of Youth Ministries, Elaine is very anxious to minister to the youth. She believes that she has a medium through which Bible content can be taught, understood and retained. She believes it is a medium through which the youth's faith and spiritual lives will be developed. She currently ministers to a few students per week. She is so anxious to reach youth that she goes and picks up three children in the neighborhood to take them to church in her car. She continues to minister even when there is only one student in attendance. She carries on the day's worship with integrity and respect.

The model of ministry that is being shaped in Elaine is that of producing a model of artistic Biblical content that can be infused into worship services everywhere. Its foci may be derived from lectionaries in order that it may address the important seasons of the Christian faith. The absence of a mentor or spiritual guide throughout most of her life compels her, for she believes that her life would have been even fuller and richer had there been someone, or if she knew more biblical content. She has developed a desire to provide youth with guidance toward living lives which are influenced by Christian thought, theology and Biblical content.

Because Elaine cannot recall much biblical content in her pastor's sermons as a young girl, she wants to bring back to worship services the focus of Biblical content in

ways that are reflective and memorable. Thus, she is driven by her belief that today's worship services need to make more references to biblical content. She is also driven by her desire to provide those persons who do not attend Bible study classes with Biblical content during worship using the visual modality of learning. Elaine's model of Christian Education ministry and her artistic presentations of scripture will aid in the creative infusion of more scriptural/biblical content into the worship services, and simultaneously in the hearts and minds of worshipers.

Context

The context in which Elaine will do ministry is that of Immanuel Bethel United Church of Christ. It is located in Dolton, Illinois, which sits approximately fifteen miles south of Chicago. Elaine will evaluate this context through a thorough examination of its history, geographical context, membership data, diversity make-up, and congregational concerns.

Dolton boasts a population of approximately 25,600, according to the 2000 Census report.² Dolton is a city known for its diversity, for it is comprised of three main subgroups—Caucasians, African Americans, and Hispanics. While its Caucasian population includes multiple nationalities, it makes up only twelve percent of Dolton's

²Dolton, Illinois Facts, Schools, Colleges, Weather, Zip Code and More, <http://www.citytowninfo.com/places/illinois/dolton> (accessed March 2, 2009).

total population³. African Americans make up roughly eighty-two percent, and Hispanics, three percent.⁴

Immanuel Bethel United Church of Christ was first formed in 1887 as the German Evangelical Church.⁵ It was first formed in response to the needs of union members and members of Masonic Lodges and other fraternal lodges and other fraternal organizations to have a place to worship because they were not allowed to worship in the Lutheran Church.⁶ The church met twice a month and its membership grew rapidly. Because of its rapid growth, influx of non-German-speaking congregants, and the 1934 merger between the Evangelical Church and the Reformed Church, the congregation was prompted to change its name to “Immanuel Evangelical and Reformed Church.”⁷ Twenty-three years later, in 1957, the Evangelical and Reformed Churches merged with the Christian and Congregational Churches to form the United Church of Christ. Consequently, in a display of acceptance and support, Immanuel Evangelical and Reformed Church changed its name once again to the name it bears today—Immanuel Bethel United Church of Christ (IBUCC).⁸ In 1963, they broke ground under their new name, and moved into their current location in 1964.

Immanuel Bethel has an extensive mission statement in which their identity as Christians is defined as “A community of Christian people who seek to follow the way of

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Henrietta Bassler, interview by author, Chicago, Illinois, March 2, 2009.

⁶While there exists a *red book*, which details the history of Immanuel Bethel United Church of Christ, its whereabouts are unknown. This information is taken from an interview with Henrietta Bassler, who is the daughter of one of the church’s former pastors, Phillip Bassler, who served from 1932-1947.

⁷Bassler, March 2, 2009.

⁸Ibid.

Christ.”⁹ In it, they parallel their desire to care for humanity near and far to God’s deep caring love. As they outline their strategies for fulfilling the role of a caring community, they identify five strategies. These strategies include 1) worshiping together in efforts to hear the word of God, advance their knowledge of God, and comprehend the life and teachings of Christ; 2) offering their tithes and talents to God and the community; 3) supporting one another in difficult times, and celebrating one another in joyous times; 4) embracing all who would worship with them; and 5) struggling to understand the local community’s needs, and responding to them appropriately. It is also Immanuel Bethel’s mission to take part in the ministry of the wider church.¹⁰ When Ms. Candi Yehnert presented Elaine with the mission statement, she made sure to bring to Elaine’s attention one fact—there was nothing in the mission statement about communal prayer.

Immanuel Bethel takes pride in its proven adaptability record and recognizes the inevitability of the change that must occur within its walls. Its members agree that if they are going to include the community, as stated in their mission statement, then in response to the rapid population shift of the surrounding community to African-American residents, they must consider adding African Americans to their membership roster,¹¹ and elements of worship that appeal to African Americans. However, IBUCC contradictorily asserts, in its vision statement, its desire to preserve and respect its 100-plus years of

⁹The researcher obtained a copy of Immanuel Bethel’s mission statement from Candi Yehnert, a member of the church. It is not known from where this statement was taken. However, it appears as an official document.

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¹¹Candi Yehnert submitted this vision statement development worksheet to the researcher. It does not appear as much as an official document as it does a rough draft. Ms. Yehnert could not locate an official document.

character and identity, and thus maintain itself as the same church. Here is where the problem arises. Their commitment to their more than 100 years of character and integrity makes including diverse cultural elements of worship almost impossible. In fact, a concern expressed by one of the African-American members of the church, was that the church has no programs, religious or otherwise,¹² which either highlight or even encourage diversity; this fact is odd in a church in which many religious backgrounds comprise its makeup. Most the people were raised Evangelical and Reformed. However, former Baptists, Apostolic, Catholics, and Jewish worshipers now attend Immanuel Bethel.¹³ So again surfaces the question of how to infuse worship elements that attract/appeal to African Americans.

Immanuel Bethel has a consistent formal worship service, which maintains God as its center. There is no formal dress code, however. Its worship structure allows for deviation from regular worship only four times a year on fifth Sundays, which are designated as youth worship Sundays. Usually on these Sundays a more contemporary style of worship is held, consisting of a greater employment of the arts (drama, dance, drill team). While only one hour in length, it manages to encapsulate the components that would provide for complete formal worship and fellowship. It opens with a musical prelude and ringing of bells, followed by announcements and the passing of the peace. The choir sings three songs in a praise chorus before the call to worship, usually done as a responsive reading, is made. Readings are taken from both the Old and New

¹²Mable Hughes, one of the church's African-American members, approached the researcher with the concern that she never hears any of the old songs sung the way they sang them in her old Church of God in Christ church. She stated that she longed to hear some of those old songs once in a while, for she missed hearing them.

¹³Reverend Dr. Khani Hawkins Bell, interview by researcher, Chicago, Illinois, March 1, 2009. Pastor Khani was the first African-American Pastor at Immanuel Bethel United Christ.

Testaments. The worship service boasts congregational interaction throughout, as they participate in the various worship components.

Separate worship services are held every Sunday for adults and youth at 10:30 AM. Sunday school is held at 9:15 AM. Choir rehearsals for adults and youth are held Sunday mornings at 9:30 AM before the worship services. On the first Wednesday of each month, the congregation gathers for prayer at 6:30 PM. The church is governed by congregation polity in the form of a Council. Immanuel Bethel holds its Council meetings on the second Tuesday of every month. At Council meetings, all church decisions are made.

Some of the symbols and artifacts that make Immanuel Bethel unique are its big stained glass window in the chapel, which was designed by a member of the church. According to Ms. Bassler, the basket of grapes symbolizes the world. The altar and pulpit in the main sanctuary were brought from the old church; they hold special meaning in the church. The UCC banner in the sanctuary also serves to make the church unique. Immanuel Bethel has a functioning bell tower on its steeple that chimes at noon and 6:00 P.M. every day. The huge wooden cross in the sanctuary is yet another artifact unique to Immanuel Bethel.

The three most important facts in the church's history would most likely include its formation, its reformation, and its appointment of its first African-American pastor. The fact that it was formed out of the union because of the Lutheran Church's rejection of union and fraternal organization members makes the church unique. Its continued evolution through mergers and the combination of three churches, speaks volumes about its commitment to Christian ministry. The congregation's appointment of Reverend Dr.

Khani Hawkins as its first African-American pastor speaks to their commitment to their mission of understanding and embracing the local community.

Immanuel Bethel became an important presence in the local community, neighboring communities and the world. In the beginning, their impact on the City Ward of Dolton was a positive one, for several workers at the Ward were members of Immanuel Bethel. Immanuel Bethel quickly became the host site for the City of Dolton's annual picnic. In recent years, however, the nature of their impacts on one another shifted from positive partnering to hostility. When William Shaw became Mayor of the City of Dolton, in 1997, he fired all of the workers there. Believing that their dismissals were unjust, the workers and members of Immanuel Bethel filed a lawsuit. They won the case and racial disharmony resulted.¹⁴

Vacation Bible School and its annual Back-to-School Bazaar are the main impacts that the church has on the local community. Immanuel Bethel holds vacation Bible school workshops in preparation for the upcoming session. In the past, Immanuel Bethel shared annual Vacation Bible School and Lenten Services with two nearby churches, but that practice has since ceased. Immanuel Bethel has seen its Vacation Bible School grow from two children, who were both the Pastors' children in 2002, to thirty-five children in 2008.¹⁵ Even though the church has made extensive attempts to reach out to the very children who attended the Vacation Bible School, it met little success; for many of the children who attended the Vacation Bible School were members of other churches or had come from out of town to visit relatives, and since returned home. The remaining few

¹⁴Reverend Dr. Khani Hawkins Bell, interview by researcher, Chicago, Illinois, March 1, 2009. Pastor Khani was the first African-American Pastor at Immanuel Bethel United Christ.

¹⁵Ibid.

simply did not come. Thus, it appears that the community has little stake in the church other than the two fun events that occur annually.

Immanuel Bethel impacts the City of Dolton by contributing funds to the St. Jude organization of the Catholic Church. Every year they donate over 200 pairs of socks to the Ingalls Memorial Hospital in the nearby city of Harvey, Illinois.¹⁶ They also contribute monthly to the Night Ministry of the Chicago Metropolitan Association in the forms of hats, gloves, scarves, hot chocolate, and lemonade.¹⁷

Immanuel Bethel United Church of Christ also impacted the world as they sent missionaries to accompany the Wider Church of the United Church of Christ on missions to other countries. They then held annual Missions Festivals, during which these missionaries returned home from Honduras and India to share their experiences.¹⁸

Immanuel Bethel has a membership count of 148. The average worship service boasts approximately fifty members in attendance.¹⁹ Its largest membership was approximately 225 members beginning back in 1945 or so.²⁰ Membership began dwindling rapidly in 1987 due to the relocation of the younger families and the dying out of the senior members. While there are a couple of families who reside in the neighborhood, most of the members do not. There are three persons currently on the church's payroll.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Yehnert, March 2, 2009.

¹⁸Bassler, March 2, 2009.

¹⁹Dolton Immanuel Bethel UCC, <http://www.ucc.org/find/dolton-immanuel-behtel-ucc.html>.

²⁰Bassler, interview et al, 2009.

Even though nationalities may vary greatly amongst the Whites at Immanuel Bethel, the racial makeup consists of only two groups—African Americans and Whites. The majority of the members had a high school education and made a living by working hard. They were generous in their giving to the church, however; for they are known to give above and beyond the ten percent tithing requirement. The members' ages range from three months to over seventy years. Seventy percent of the members are age seventy and older. Ten percent are between the ages of sixty and seventy. Fifteen percent are ages forty to sixty. Five percent are between the ages of nineteen and forty. The number of children whose ages fall between three months and nineteen years old is 1.2%.²¹ Approximately twenty members are married, while thirty members have never been married; forty-five members are divorced or widowed, and five members are foster children.²²

The overall sentiment of the members interviewed was that of hopefulness. Dr. Hawkins was hopeful because of the members' high levels of maturity, hunger for God and a deeper knowledge of God, and desires to be led, do right, and work for God. Ms. Bassler was hopeful that the church would be an operative force in the community and that they would continue on their journey of faith and survive. She was hopeful regarding the church's receptivity to change, for she has seen their willingness to try and their actual attempts. Ms. Yehnert was hopeful that the church would become a praying Church, even more so than today. She was hopeful in the church's diversity, for the church would have to be diverse in order to embrace the African-American community

²¹Hawkins Bell, et al.

²²Ibid.

that surrounds it. She also was hopeful that the word of God would be brought to the children, and that Immanuel Bethel would reach out to the community even more.

Synergy

In examining her context of ministry, Immanuel Bethel United Church of Christ, Elaine believes that her ministry has a place there indeed. Several factors lead her to this conclusion. The first factor is a combination of the church's location and its desire to reach out to the surrounding community. Immanuel Bethel is a predominantly Euro-American church located in the heart of an African-American community, and it is a church that wants to reach out to the community. Its members have tried repeatedly, yet except for its vacation Bible school, were unsuccessful. While the rapidly increasing success of its vacation Bible school indicates that there are several African-American children in the community who are interested in church, and will attend, retaining them, as attendees, and even members, has proven to be a difficult task. They need someone who can help them attract, relate to, and maintain relationships with those in the African-American community. Elaine's experience as an African-American teacher of young children renders her capable of reaching those children. Her experiences of maintaining children's interests through dramatic interpretation provides for an opportunity to attract youth as permanent members. Her skills as a playwright, and actress, and her attainment of a Masters of Arts degree in the performing arts will be the bases for providing quality and biblically enriching Christian Education to the youth of the surrounding community to the extent to which they would want to remain at Immanuel Bethel.

Another factor is the concern of the members of Immanuel Bethel of maintaining its character, while growing the church. Immanuel Bethel needs to grow while it remains the same. The nature of Elaine's ministry—the infusion of dramatic interpretation of the biblical scriptures into the worship service—allows for the maintenance of the church's character, while providing a new and innovative medium for attracting new members. Because the focus of the dramatic presentations will be that of biblical content, the character of the church will remain unchanged.

Another concern of the church was that of it dying out because of the ages of most of its members. Immanuel Bethel is comprised mostly of seniors whose concern for the church is that of longevity. They are getting old, but they do not want the church to die out. With only a small percentage of the church's membership being made up of young children, the church needs more youth. Immanuel Bethel needs younger members to carry it through yet another generation. Candi Yehnert, had concerns about her experiences as a youth growing up at Immanuel Bethel. She was never taught the Bible, and neither was she taught how to have a relationship with God. She pleaded with Elaine to provide Christian Education that taught the children how to have a relationship with God. Elaine believes that that education begins with Biblical content. Elaine knows firsthand the importance of having a relationship with God. Mrs. Yehnert's assertion of the church's need for this and Elaine's passion for the impartation of Biblical content to our youth for the purpose of leading them to the development of a relationship with God renders her ministry and her context succinctly compatible with one another.

Elaine has a passion for youth. She wants them to know the word in order that they may make the best life choices that they could possibly make. However, her

experience as an educator informs her belief that today's youth have to be reached through a variety of activities and styles of learning, and that allowing the youth to showcase themselves through artistic expressions captures their interest. Elaine has found that students love performing; and audiences love performances. Inspiring students to perform the word of God would be vital to the growth of Immanuel Bethel, for it would provide an attractive medium for our youth. Elaine needed someone to lead her toward the word of God as she faced her life's difficulties, and so do the youth of today. Elaine needed someone to steer her toward Sunday school, to tell her to read the Bible, and to give her scriptures to which to refer when in need, and according to Mrs. Yehnert, so do the youth of Immanuel Bethel.

Realizing that children can come to church only when parents bring them or allow them, Elaine sees the need as imperative that youth are provided with as much biblical content as possible on Sunday morning, while they are at church, and are shown how to apply this biblical content to their own personal experiences. This biblical content must not be imparted passively to the youth, but rather in ways that are interactive, so that the youth are led to experience the word of God. If the students are provided with biblical content in ways that are meaningful, reflective, interesting, and engaging, then they will thirst for more. They will be excited about Christ and church. Elaine believes this excitement will raise their parents' interests, and bring them to church as well, thus increasing the overall membership of the church.

Many factors of Elaine's life can be referenced as she does ministry at Immanuel Bethel. They include the conditions of poverty in which she lived, the ridicule she suffered at the hands of her friends, her experience with the penal system, her innate

leadership tendencies, her storm experience, and her experiences with *better*. There is a common thread that runs through each one of these experiences—the need to know the word of God. Elaine believes that had she been more knowledgeable of the Bible and its content, she could/would have used it as a reference, and made better choices throughout her life's situations.

Elaine learned humility through the ridicule she faced from her friends. Although she was hurt by their actions, she was neither angry nor desirous of revenge. Instead she became determined to one day, with the help of God, be able to get herself the finer things in life. Her lack of the ability to afford nice things led her to focus on the intangible things in life, mainly love and joy—joy in knowing Christ exists, and the joy of getting to celebrate Christ's birthday with a pure feeling of love. She believes that all children should possess such love for Christ.

Elaine's first-hand experience with the penal system helped her to learn what repentance and prayer meant, and what, through faith, prayer and repentance could do. Her not having had to serve time and having had all charges dropped were examples of God's mercy and grace. Elaine knew of repentance, mercy, and grace neither by their definitions nor as biblical referents at the time. She knew only prayer. She was not familiar with Romans 3:23, which states that "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," or Luke 5:32, which states, "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Had she been familiar with the scriptures, she would have released at a much earlier age in her life the shame and humiliation which burdened her for many years. She now believes that all children should know these terms as God sees them and these scriptures and more, for they may need to refer to them at some point in their lives.

The experiences Elaine derived from her misguided trust in others' knowledge of the Word of God provided her with a clearer sense of who God is. Those whom she thought somehow had much closer relationships to God than she, who knew more about God than she, and who knew the Bible much better than she, manipulated her trust only for their own selfish gains by providing her with false promises and false teachings. However, in time, God showed her that God alone would provide indefinitely for her needs, and that God loved her and would reveal God's self to her just as God would to others. Had she known earlier of James 1:5, which states, "If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you," then she would have known of her own access to God and God's power. Elaine believes that all children, youth, and adults should know that they have direct access to God themselves, and they should know for themselves what pleases and/or displeases God.

Elaine's experiences of when she encountered a natural storm revealed to her the transcendence and eminence of God, although she did not know them as such at the time. The storm experience was both actual and symbolic in nature, for while Elaine was brought through a natural storm, she refers to God's attendance to this incident when she is faced with other difficult times or *storms*. God showed Elaine that God is near, and that God hears her every cry. God sent an angel down to her rescue. Elaine was not aware of Psalm 91:15, which states, "When they call to me, I will answer them. I will be with them in times of trouble; I will rescue them and honor them." This comforting scripture would have been invaluable to Elaine as she faced the storm. Elaine believes that all children

should be aware of scriptures to which they can refer whenever they find themselves in need; scriptures that remind them that they can just call God and God will answer.

Elaine's career in education as teacher and currently Assistant Principal in the public school system of Chicago, a very impoverished school system, has led to her ministry as well. While she has had opportunities to work in a middle-class white public school in the South and a middle-class African-American school in the Midwest, Elaine believes that she is most needed only within the Chicago Public Schools system in which she has worked-- an impoverished, inner-city elementary school. She sees the necessity of the students to know God and Christ, for she believes they need another alternative when they face the circumstances that they face on a regular basis. Because they are infants in the faith, they are receptive to her guidance. Elaine can relate to their circumstantial conditions of poverty, and therefore speak to the students with experiential authority. She is compelled to share what she knows about God as a resource in many of their situations, for she believes that they all deserve to know God, to know of God, and to know of and have the *better* of the world. As an administrator, Elaine governs with justice and compassion because she remembers the compassion the Lord had for her in the mercy of the Lord shone upon her when she found herself in trouble.

Elaine's passion for equipping youth with a strong biblical foundation has led her to her project for this course of study. The model of Christian Education that is being shaped by her is that of Christian Education that utilizes the various artistic styles and modalities. This model will not only expose the students to Biblical content as opposed to only themes, but it will also lead toward the application of the biblical content to the students' real-life contexts, thus making it a meaningful resource as they reflect and

attempt to minister to others. The absence of a spiritual guide throughout most of her life compels Elaine, for she believes that her life would have been even fuller and richer had there been someone there to guide her toward the utilization of Biblical content. She has developed a desire to provide youth with guidance toward living lives which are influenced by Christian thought, theology and Biblical content.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

The project, *Acting to Act: A Youth-centered, Drama-infused Paradigm of Christian Education that Reflects Scripture and Ignites Emancipatory Learning*, carries with it four main areas of importance—the attraction and retention of youth in the church, the educational implications of infusing scripture-based drama during worship, and the transformation that may occur as a result of drama infusion. This examination of literature will address these four areas as they pertain to current trends, beliefs, and attitudes.

In Tex Sample's, *The Spectacle of Worship in a Wired World: Electronic Culture and the Gathered People of God*, Sample addresses two of the main areas of concern listed above: the importance of scripture-based worship, and the consideration of youth in worship. While Sample's overall focus addresses the importance of a worship that considers youth, he is concerned about the nature of the content that goes forth. For example, Sample acknowledges that there is a lapse in communication from pulpit to youth, and cites the ever evolving technological age as the cause for this lapse.¹ His belief in the media's power to influence experiences and attitudes compels him to call for varying approaches to communication from the pulpit to the congregation. These approaches include sound, images, and visualization, as he believes they are the most

¹Tex Sample, *Spectacle of Worship in a Wired World: Electronic Culture and the Gathered People of God* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 15.

effective ways of communication, as well as the best methods understood by youth.² This charge most appropriately resonates with the purpose of this project. Dramatic presentation serves as a method of communication that accommodates Sample's *emphasis* on visualization. Sample's assertion of visualization's role as affecter of youth's overall engagement in the world and their judgment over truth and reality³ presents a greater responsibility on the employment of dramatic presentation reflective of the scriptures, without conforming to the world. Sample's argument that the role of the church is critical and prophetic leads to his assertion that adherence to the word of God is a must. This project concurs with the very beliefs of Tex Sample, those of considering youth, for the purpose of the retention in the church and doing so by strict adherence to the word of God.

He received his B.A. from Millsaps College with a major in psychology, his M.Div. from the Boston University School of Theology and his Ph.D. from the Boston University Graduate School. He received the D.D. degree from Coe College in 2003. Academically, Sample works and teaches in the areas of U.S. lifestyles, U.S. culture, social theory and social change, power, social class and theological ethics. He pastored churches for eight years and served three years as the Director of Social Relations of the Massachusetts Council of Churches. In this last capacity he was the lobbyist for the Council and worked actively in the civil rights and peace movements. Sample is a member of the Society of Christian Ethics and a member and Fellow of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion.

²Ibid., 53.

³Ibid., 48.

Fernando Arzola, Jr.'s *Toward a Prophetic Youth Ministry: Theory and Praxis in Urban Context* asserts a holistic model of youth ministry that is composed of four paradigms: traditional—which is concerned with providing programs for youth, liberal—which is concerned with youth's personal intellectual, and emotional well-being, activist—which emphasizes the social needs of youth, and prophetic—which asserts a Christ-centered ministry.⁴ This holistic model accommodates the researcher's emphasis on both scripture-based ministry and youth-centered ministry.

Arzola incorporates the traditional, liberal, and activist paradigms into what he calls a *prophetic* model, which he asserts is a ministry designed to accommodate the social, spiritual, and personal needs of youth;⁵ in doing so, he answers evaluative question: "How is Christ growing in the lives of youth?"⁶ It is here that this book applies to the researcher's project, for they both advocate for youth ministry that addresses all needs of youth—social emotional, personal, and most importantly, the need to establish and maintain a relationship with Christ. Ministry cannot be prophetic, if it omits the authority of the scriptures, namely the gospel narratives, and the letters of Paul.

As the scriptures are dramatized by youth, they are internalized; hence, youth are educated by them. This model advocates for scripture-based ministry and asserts its importance as it pertains to youth development. This intersection of beliefs in Christ-centered ministry is profound. It is important for youth ministry leaders to know

⁴Fernando Arzola, Jr., *Toward a Prophetic Youth Ministry: Theory and Praxis in Urban Context* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 20-32.

⁵Ibid., 31.

⁶Ibid., 25.

the differences between Arzola's varying paradigms of ministry, in order for them to administer holistic, *prophetic*, youth ministry. Fernando Arzola, Jr. serves as the deputy chair for the Department of Youth Ministry and Christian Education at Nyack College in New York City, and on the board of the Association of Youth Ministry Educators (AYME). He is the founder and executive director of the Urban Family Empowerment Center in the Bronx.

Thomas E. Boomershine's *Story Journey: An Invitation to the Gospel as Storytelling* was an important informant of this project. Its purpose is similar to that of Acting to Act. The researcher's belief that this project serves to educate the young actors and adult viewers is validated by Boomershine, as he believes there is an education dimension to his work, as well. The researcher's belief that youth must first understand the scriptures they plan to dramatize aligns with Boomershine's assertion that the art of storytelling the gospels cannot be understood unless people first learn to tell the stories; understanding what it is one is trying to portray is the key to getting the message of the story across to the hearer.⁷ While Boomershine references the story of Israel in the Old Testament and the various monumental events that depict God's love and power as formers of a unique storytelling tradition, his focus is on the story of Jesus as it is told in the Gospels.⁸ This is where Boomershine's work's differs from Acting to Act. While coincidentally, the scriptures included in this project are basically from the New Testament because of the Pastor's assignment, the researcher has no intent for such limitation.

⁷Thomas E. Boomershine, *Story Journey an Invitation to the Gospel as Storytelling* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 18.

⁸Ibid., 19.

Boomershine asserts community creation as an end result of storytelling.⁹ This suggestion informs the project in as much as it validates the project's alignment with Immanuel Bethel's character, described by some of the congregants as the family-like nature of the church (See Figure 21H).

Lastly, *Story Journey* informs Acting to Act through its suggestion that there is sacramental transference that occurs whenever the storyteller or hearer makes a personal connection to the story.¹⁰ The researcher relies on such moments to bring about transformation in youth participants, transformation that she believes to be the invitation of life long relationship with God and the church.

Story Journey is intended as a guide through the gospel tradition through oral narration. Acting to Act is the depiction of the biblical narratives through dramatic presentation, still orally, but with visual inclusions for an even clearer depiction. *Story Journey* includes the components learning, telling, and connecting. The researcher believes Acting to Act contains similar components-- study/rehearsal, dramatization, and applications. Thomas Boomershine is the founder of the Network of Biblical Storytellers. He is a New Testament scholar and former professor at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio.

Iris V. Cully's "A Theology of Children" in the *Review and Expositor* informs this project in that it speaks to the attraction and retention of youth to the church, via the concept of assuring them that they indeed have a place in worship. Telling youth that they are valued in the worship service does not take much effort; however, impacting them to the point of belief is another issue altogether. It is just as important for children to believe

⁹Ibid., 19.

¹⁰Ibid., 21.

that they are accepted in worship as it is for them to be told that they have a place. It is Cully's belief that every child should be afforded the opportunity to grow into the person whom God intended.¹¹ This project is informed by this belief. Immanuel Bethel's congregation realizes the importance of youth in their church, as they have expressed the need for youth to carry the church forward. In Acting to Act, the researcher has sought to develop a model that gives youth a value-deemed place within the worship service itself, anticipating that they would commit themselves to God and the church.

Cully advocates that youth are embraced unconditionally, with total disregard for where they live,¹² and charges adults with the responsibility of youth's advocacy and assurance of their acceptance.¹³

Immanuel Bethel's expressed need for youth in the church and Cully's assertions that 1) Children, created and redeemed by God, are participants in the kingdom of God, and as such they are full members of the church and 2) A worship service should be designed in some way to meet the needs of all people, including those of children,¹⁴ compelled the researcher to create a project which highly regards youth, and which secures their place in worship.

It is Cully's belief in youth's ability to process redemption through the experiences of sin, repentance, and forgiveness,¹⁵ which also ties it to the researcher's project in that if youth know the word of God and can identify sin, repentance, and

¹¹Iris V. Cully, "A Theology of Children," *Review and Expositor*, 80 no 2 (Spring, 1983): 210.

¹²Ibid., 204.

¹³Ibid., 203.

¹⁴Ibid., 207.

¹⁵Ibid., 205.

forgiveness, then their decisions might be affected by this knowledge, and influence them more favorably towards God. As the aforementioned concepts are present throughout the New Testament and dramatized through scripture-based dramatic presentations, Cully's belief in youth's ability to process far more than adults expect suggests that Christian education is indeed occurring, a suggestion in direct support of the researcher's intent that this project is paradigmatic of Christian Education. In terms of youth ministry, if children are educated about the teachings of Christ, then their judgment and their knowledge will reflect such. Cully's theology of children insists that children belong to the church as inherent creations of God secures their place in worship without question. As the seniors in the researcher's context seek to define the role of children in worship, Cully's work and this project defines such, and thus, not only answers the question of whether children have a place in worship, but also solidifies that place.

Dr. Cully is a former Professor of Religious Education at Lexington Theological Seminary in Lexington, KY. She graduated from Hartford Theological Seminary with a master's in religious education. Dr. Cully later earned her B.D. and Ph.D. in a joint program with Garrett Theological Seminary and Northwestern University. She was appointed Associate Professor at Yale Divinity School in 1965, the first woman professor in its history, and served as the first woman president of the Association of Professors and Researchers in Religious Education. She was the first woman professor at a Disciples of Christ seminary. Her most noteworthy works were those done on behalf of children.

Candi-Dugas Crawford's, "Taste and See the God of Your Ancestors: Drama in the African-American Church" in the *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* insists that African-Americans should be the driving force behind the movement

to incorporate drama in worship because of their history of uninhibited holistic worship.¹⁶

Dugas-Crawford sees worship, itself, as drama, for she believes that it serves a sort of transcendent release through its combination of the elements of art, music, architecture, and dance, a release that provided for the replenishment of self and self-expression as worshipers were ushered out of reality and into a metaphorical actuality.¹⁷ She speaks against worship services that seek to ensure liturgical purity by containing only singing and preaching and suggests that the worshiper's encounter with God presents "a divine rendezvous," in which meeting, feeling, hearing, knowing, tasting, touching, and seeing God comprise its essence.¹⁸ Dugas-Crawford traces the history of African-Americans in worship and reflects the transformation that has traditionally occurred during such worship services.

Dugas-Crawford asserts this transformation as imperative for African Americans. She further explicates the United Methodist Church's belief that people all over are in search of God, she concludes that it is imperative that churches find ways of reaching these people, for rigid worship is not an appropriate style.¹⁹ The researcher takes refuge in this assertion in terms of the appropriateness of this project, for as Immanuel Bethel UCC sits in the heart of the African-American community, it is of the utmost importance that appropriate means of attracting, educating, transforming, and retaining youth are attempted. Her belief that the drama brings the Word alive implies a call for the infusion

¹⁶Candi Dugas-Crawford, "Taste and See the God of Your Ancestors: Drama in the African-American Church," *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 27, no1- 2 (Fall/Spring, 1999-2000): 195.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., 186.

¹⁹Ibid., 189.

of drama into worship. The researcher's belief in drama as a viable method of Christian education aligns with Crawford's viewpoint. As one of the problems with the researcher's context is that of attracting and retaining youth, this source serves as an instrument of support for drama as a means of doing so. Candi Dugas-Crawford graduated from Atlanta's Interdenominational Theological Center and directs the Fine Arts Academy at Ben Hill United Methodist Church in Atlanta.

Tabatha Crayton's article, "Theater Bringing Applause and People Back to Church," answers the question of whether or not dramatic presentations have a place in worship. Crayton suggests that there is a correlation between drama and worship, as she examines the increase in the number of religious stage plays.²⁰ One of her important points of observation is that religious plays are netting an increase in church attendance across the country. She accredits this influx of new members to entertainment's capability of reaching those people who are not ordinarily found in church.²¹ Her accreditation to her interviewee, Anthony Vann's, belief that the elements of good singing, good music, and drama, all of which are found in religious plays, serve as the protagonists for bringing the unchurched to church²² aligns with the attraction dimension of this the researcher's intent for this project. However, while the attraction element concurs with the researcher's purpose for the project, this article falls short in its full applicability to the project, as it neglects to makes mention of the attraction of youth, which is one of the primary foci of this project, .

²⁰Tabatha Crayton, "Theater Bringing Applause and People Back to Church," *The Spiritual Herald*, May, 2004.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

One seemingly contradictory idea that can be found between other scholars' positions and the position presented in this work is the interviewee's suggestion that there is a minimization of biblical emphasis in religious plays.²³ In fact, Vann urges playwrights not to over-saturate its audiences with preaching. If taken literally, this assertion conflicts with one of the components of the researcher's paradigm; clearly, it warrants clarification. The emphasis is not as much on minimizing the message of God, as it is on its over-emphasis in presentation. Oftentimes, those who do not attend church regularly are offended by viewpoints that they consider *too strong*, or overbearing. As the patrons of staged theater have invested monetarily in entertainment, they may not welcome the imposition of what feels too churchy. Whereby the message is allowed, religion is not; religion will be obtained as they return to church. However over-saturating, Vann fears too much Bible talk or preaching potentially might be, he assumes the responsibility for getting the message of God out to the people.

Vann asserts that this notion of people as seekers is common among scholars. It calls the church to responsibility. Bill Hybels, the Pastor of the Willow Creek Church of South Barrington, Illinois, answered this call; he has set as its mission that of innovative evangelism in an attempt to appeal to the non-churched seekers.²⁴ Willow Creek staffs person's full-time theater employees, and is equipped with an exhaustive array of theatrical equipment. Hybels proceeds in opposition to Vann's concern about the negative impact of too much biblicism, for he operates under the auspice that the use of drama in worship is not entertainment, but merely the repackaging of the communication

²³Tabatha Crayton, "Theater Bringing Applause and People Back to Church," *The Spiritual Herald*, May, 2004.

²⁴Mozelle Clark Sherman, "Life More Abundant: The Dramatic Worship Experience, *Review and Expositor*, 90 (1993): 276.

venues of the biblical narratives through contemporary music, drama, and other arts media.²⁵ This push for innovation in worship fuels this project. The researcher drew from the people's (youth in the community and adult worshipers) need to hear from God as she developed this project. Tabatha Crayton is a 1990 graduate from the State University of New York College at Brockport. She is an executive office professional in New York City.

Mozelle Clark Sherman's "Life More Abundant: The Dramatic Worship Experience" informs the transformational dimension of this project. Sherman echoes Crayton's belief that the use of the arts in worship is a ministry at work; for it is a reply to God's directive, rendering transforming power.²⁶ Sherman's belief in the active participation of the worshipers and actors as learners allows for a learning experience that is immeasurable. Sherman urges leaders of drama ministries to focus on the experience of learning. The Rehearsal/Study phase of Acting to Act did just that, for the researcher believes that youth must know and understand what it is that they enact in order to give a clearer portrayal of the biblical narratives. Youth must become learners as they seek to educate the congregants. It is through their understanding of the content that they are transformed. Scholars also are concurring that there is a transcendent element to spirituality and that can be found in worship, and Sherman is one of these. He suggests that the incorporation of the arts brings about increased praise levels, increased depth insight, and increased mental transcendence, to the point at which one can expand one's

²⁵Ibid., 276.

²⁶Ibid., 279.

expression capabilities.²⁷ Sherman speaks of drama's ability to bring characters out of the biblical narratives into the real lives of the worshipers. This makes the stories more real, relevant, and more comprehensible. If it is the church's responsibility or mission to reveal in actuality the mystery of Jesus Christ, then dramatizing the scriptures is a way of doing so.

Patricia Cranton's, *Professional Development as Transformational Learning: New Perspectives for Teachers of Adults*, speaks to the education/application and the transformational dimensions of the project. Cranton's definition of emancipatory learning as "becoming free from forces that have limited our options, forces that have been taken for granted, or seen as beyond our control"²⁸ can be applied to more than adults in a professional development setting. This concept spills over into the religious arena, as well. It is the researcher's intent that those participating in drama ministry will, as a result, participate in the emancipatory learning process, conducting the critical reflection that is essential if transformation is to occur. Her outline of the three types of reflection—content, strategy, and premise reflection²⁹ renders the directionality of the researcher's intended inward reflection for all participants. Emancipatory learning carries one through this critical reflection process, and thus nets transformation. Cranton's definition of the roles of teachers poses a charge to Christian educators and participants. In her discussion of the learner-control process,³⁰ Cranton suggests that teachers provide opportunities for learning that fosters the notion that their own needs are explored. This translates into

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Patricia Cranton, *Professional Development as Transformative Learning: New Perspectives for Teachers and Adults* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 2.

²⁹Ibid., 81-83.

³⁰Ibid., 68.

dramatic presentation in that as actors are seeking to portray the characters of the Bible, and biblical situations, they must be willing to explore where they stand in relation to the message they are trying to relay; in essence, the actors will indulge and psychological perspectives-- which pertain to self awareness and comprehension.

The book, *Performing the Sacred: Theology and Theatre in Dialogue*, by Todd E. Johnson and Dale Savidge, is an excellent resource in tracing the history of drama in worship, as well as in examining the relationship between theater and faith. Dale Savidge gives an extensive account of the origin of drama in history dating back to 5 B.C.E. in Greek theatre, and extending beyond the Industrial Revolution. It gives an historical account of the evolution from ritual to drama as asserted in the CSA theory conducted by the Cambridge School of Anthropology.³¹ The refutation of shamanist influence in the history of theater somewhat negates transcendental element of dramatic worship,³² an idea in which the researcher believes. Todd E. Johnson, in his essay entitled, "Live Theatre in a Virtual World," discusses T. S. Eliot's insistence that history is included in today's dramatic presentations. In disagreement, however, the researcher sees scripture as the dominant necessary content.

This information is applicable to this project because it solidifies a place for drama in contemporary worship based on its history. Any argument that drama does not have a place in contemporary worship is refuted by the fact that since Christianity's inception, the dramatic arts have been present. The researcher is confident in her belief that drama indeed has a place in today's worship.

³¹Dale Savidge, "A Survey of Christianity and Theatre in History," in *Performing the Sacred: Engaging Culture, Theology, and Theatre in Dialogue* by Todd E. Johnson and Dale Savidge (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 23.

³²Ibid., 24.

Todd E. Johnson is the William K. and Laurel Brehm Associate Professor of Worship, Theology, and the Arts at Fuller theological seminary in Pasadena, California, and a member of the North American Academy of liturgy. Dale Savidge has two master's degrees in theater and a Ph.D. in English and theater from the University of South Carolina. He currently serves as the Executive Director of *CITA* or *Christians in Theatre Arts*.

Fredericka Berger's "Spiritual Formation through Drama" speaks of the implicit pedagogical potential of drama in Christian education. It informs this project because of its emphasis on bringing the scriptures to life. Berger considers drama as an existential art, an art form of the present, a theory of Christopher Fry, a British playwright.³³ The most nominal attribute of drama as an educational tool is that of its aura of existence—it does not imitate real life, but instead, it actualizes life as it is carried out.³⁴ This is important because of the factor of relevance as it pertains to the scriptures. In today's contemporary era, the Bible often is looked at as an ancient document, non-applicable to today's situations. The word of God is a living document, and it must be conveyed as such.

Berger believes that the real source of power generation in drama is in the characterization; it is characterization's richness that establishes its quality.³⁵ This is important to this project because it aligns with the researcher's passion for presenting quality drama during worship, hence her preference of Bible-based dramas over thematic ones enhanced with additives and one-dimensional characters.

³³Fredericka Berger, "Spiritual Formation through Drama," *The Arts* 15, no 1, (2003): 35.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

Berger insists upon the well-roundedness of all characters, but asserts that this can be the case only if all characters are fully aware of themselves,³⁶ and this concept intertwines with Patricia Cranton's call for teachers to do critical self-reflection before they engage in the act of educating others.³⁷ The actors, as teachers, in a biblical drama should reflect upon the scripture's meaning and its application to their lives, before they attempt to perform it before others. They must be fully aware of the how and why of a scripture before attempting to interpret it before others; for then they can rise above the barriers that hinder them—hence, they experience emancipatory learning.³⁸

Another important element of Berger's work is her assertion of the pedagogical value of drama as an art form. She asserts that art's open invitation to the imagination, an imperative if one ever expects to take a leap of faith, qualifies it as a viable vessel for ushering seminary students into greater depths of their own spirituality in preparation for ministry.³⁹ Although her belief in the transforming power of drama resembles Berger's belief, the researcher's intended purpose for employing drama does not, for Berger advocates the use of the dramatic arts to educate seminarians on their journey to becoming ministers, while the researcher uses them as a form of ministry. Not only are the audience members receiving education as they witness the scriptures come to life, but the players are being educated, as well, as they reflect critically upon the scriptures.

³⁶Ibid., 36.

³⁷Patricia Cranton, *Professional Development as Transformative Learning: New Perspectives for Teachers of Adults* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 76.

³⁸Ibid., 2.

³⁹Berger, *Spiritual Formation Through Drama*, 36.

This essay is relevant to this project, as it seeks to clarify the educational implications of infusing drama in worship. It informs the project as it answers the question of whether or not drama can serve as a tool in Christian education, as asserted by the researcher, as well as emphasizes the inclusion of the components of study and reflection when making a dramatic presentation.

Horton Davies' "Reshaping the Worship of the United Church of Christ" traces the history of worship in the United Church of Christ by historicizing the journey of its creation, and explicating the traditions that merged to become the United Church of Christ—the Evangelical German Church, the Reformed Church in the U.S.A., and the Congregational Christian Church. Davies details the journey from each Church's worship style, ranging from the highly liturgical service of the Reformed Church to the spontaneous enthusiasm of the Evangelical German Church.⁴⁰ This work informs Acting to Act, because it shows the level of openness and autonomy that is the character of the UCC, and establishes Immanuel Bethel UCC as the perfect setting for a project such as Acting to Act.

The definition of the Church's character was developed by the UCC's Commission on Worship, established in 1960.⁴¹ The mandates of devising worship that was deemed suitable and embraced the different needs of those who were accustomed to more spontaneous worship formats while allowing for more ministerial liberties in

⁴⁰Horton Davies, "Reshaping the Worship of the United Church of Christ," *Worship*, 41 no 9 (1967), 542.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 544.

worship⁴² netted services with liturgical order, but with substitution liberties.⁴³ This liberation in worship sets the stage for drama-infusion. The content of this essay is relevant to this project because the researcher's context is that of Immanuel Bethel, a church in the United Church of Christ denomination. Again, it suggests at the least the opportunity for the project's consideration in terms of its appropriateness for this context. Therefore, the researcher expects not to meet opposition when implementing the paradigm, as, according to Davies, it is the goal of the United Church of Christ to provide worship that embraces the diverse cultural needs of the congregation. The knowledge gained from this essay supports the researcher's efforts in leading the congregation in its reflection on whether or not they are meeting the needs of the African-American children who are drawn to the church's youth ministry today.

Davies describes the first aim of the service as one which stresses unity and balance of word and sacrament, sermon and supper, and communication-table.⁴⁴

Trends that stand out are amongst the entirety of this literature include the notion of the educator as learner, that drama qualifies as an educational tool, that there is transformation that occurs when one participates in religious drama in any capacity, and that history presents itself as a qualifier for drama's place in worship today. All of these trends align with one another in support of the mantra of this model, *Acting to Act: A Youth-centered, Drama-infused Paradigm of Christian Education that Reflects Scripture and Ignites Emancipatory Learning*—attract, educate, transform, and retain.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid., 544.

⁴⁴Ibid., 546-547.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The value of Christian education, as it applies to the entire makeup of the church is underestimated by many in churches today. In his book, *Religious Education in the African-American Tradition: A Comprehensive Introduction*, Kenneth H. Hill discusses the relationship between theology and Christian education dynamics. He asserts Christian education as the structural underpinning of every other ministry of the church,¹ as it serves as the artery through which information necessary for increased faith-formation is transported. The focus group, Christian education and Urban Ministry Development, operates under this conviction. In other words, everything practiced, preached, sung, read, taught, danced, donated, assisted, celebrated, and more, arises from Christian education.

The implementation of a Christian education program and the dissemination of Christian information requires consideration of many factors, including methodology, accuracy, and content. This brings to the forefront the importance of Christian education's components—those of content, pedagogy, and praxis. Churches must examine what it is they are seeking to teach, relative to what they are already teaching, and how they are teaching it. They must evaluate effectiveness as they consider the strategies they will employ by addressing the question, "Which strategies will best

¹Kenneth H. Hill, *Religious Education in the African American Tradition: A Comprehensive Introduction* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2007), 82.

disseminate Christian information to the congregation?" As congregations differ, so must the curricula that they utilize; no single method of pedagogy is exhaustive. Christian education programs need to consider including the modalities of learning—kinesthetic, auditory, and visual if they hope to reach the diverse makeup of their congregations.

The project, *Acting To Act: A Youth-Centered, Drama-Infused Paradigm of Christian education That Reflects Scripture And Ignites Emancipatory Learning*, asserts the scriptures as its curricular content, and drama as its methodology for educating the congregation. Hill supports these pedagogical choices, for he suggests scripture's capability to pose as curricular content, as asserted in its parables, poetry, proverbs, prayers, liturgy, songs, and more.² For Hill, Christian education is the dimension of church ministry that purports to bring about dialogue between the life, cultural, and Christian stories,³ and the Bible as central to Christian education.⁴ This means that Christian education is the vessel for making connections between the biblical narratives, life situations and cultural experiences. This project seeks to educate the members of Immanuel Bethel (especially youth) to the point of these dialogical occurrences, in order that they may form relationships with God and ultimately be transformed into followers of Christ. Hill believes that teaching the scriptures as a story, and then connecting the biblical narratives to the African-American experiences and traditions paves the way for God to release God's transformational power.⁵ This project's components of scripture

²Ibid., 41.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 39.

⁵Ibid., 41.

reflection, study, and relevance align with Hill's beliefs and are supported by various biblical, historical, and theological positions.

Biblical Foundation

The Old Testament scripture upon which this project is based is Judges 5: 12, which states, “Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.”⁶ In his book, *The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words*, James Strong attributes the English word awake to the Hebrew primitive root word *ûwr*,(*oor*) which means literally or figuratively *to wake*. It also means to lift up one's self, raise up, or stir up.⁷ In this song of Deborah, as she calls upon herself to awaken, she implies that there is a need for her to raise herself up and stir up something. Having been led by God, Deborah stirs up the possibility of liberation, or emancipation—freedom for the Israelites from the hands of Sisera, who led the army of Jabin, Israel's severe oppressor for twenty years,⁸ through the efforts of Barak. In verse twelve, Deborah asserts the self-directive of the utterance of a song, or a *zimrâth*, in Hebrew, which translates by implication to mean an instrument of praise.⁹ This reference to the utterance of praise coincides with Daniel J. Harrington's interpretation of part A of Judges 5:12 in the *Targum Jonathan* of Judges 5 – “Give praise, give praise, Deborah,

⁶Jdg 5:12(KJV).

⁷*The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words*, s.v., “Awake”.

⁸*The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, s.v., “Judges 4”.

⁹*The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words*, s.v., “Song”.

give praise, and give thanks; speak praise."¹⁰ In his notes, Harrington explains that the English translations of the Aramaic texts in the *Targum Jonathan* are written as such to "bring out the flavor of the theological texts."¹¹ This means that this English interpretation of verse 12, part A, only serves to enhance the theological texts. The researcher insists, however, that there is more to Deborah's utterances than mere praise; while *song* may be aligned with *an instrument of praise*, its purpose is of much greater significance here. The implication is that it ignites action, and that God is pleased with it. Deborah's self-directive of song utterance in verse twelve implies such a level of significance that it leads to God's elevation of Deborah over the noble and mighty (who were mostly men) in verse 13—"Then he made them that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the Lord made me have dominion over the mighty."¹² The fact that Deborah issues the self-directive in this Song of Deborah by no means diminishes the accreditation she gives to God. Charles L. Echols disagrees with this assertion, however; for he suggests that Deborah's Song categorizes as heroic poetry, giving credence to humans for the victory instead of Yahweh, and he insists that credit to God is given nowhere in Judges 5.¹³ Contrarily, accreditation is seen in verses three and thirteen. It is seen in verse three (even before she gives the account of what occurred), when Deborah speaks of singing to the Lord. It is also seen in verse thirteen, (Gillis Gerleman points out the majesty given to God here, as well in his essay, "The Song of

¹⁰Daniel J. Harrington, "The Prophecy of Deborah: Interpretative Homiletics in *Targum Jonathan* of Judges V," (*Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48 no 3 (July 1986): 435.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 435.

¹²Jdg 5:13 (KJV).

¹³Charles L. Echols, "The Eclipse of God in the Song of Deborah (Judges 5): The Role of Yahweh in the Light of Heroic Poetry," (*Tyndale Bulletin* 56 no 2 (2005): 150.

Deborah in light of Stylistics,")¹⁴ as Deborah describes the people of the Lord marching down for him.

In Judges 4:8, Barak makes a request for Deborah's presence as he carries out God's will. However, Barak's explicit expectation of Deborah in this endeavor is not clearly identified. He solicits her presence, but for what purpose? It can be determined that Barak did not expect Deborah to go to battle with him, for in verse nine, he asserts in the form of a desperate ultimatum his desire to have Deborah accompany him, as if there was a likelihood that she would not travel along —"If you will go with me, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go." If she were expected to go, then there would have been no need for the ultimatum. In Judges 4: 4, Deborah's roles are defined. She is identified as a prophetess, a wife, and a judge. Thus, the question of why Barak needs Deborah, a judge, a prophetess, and Lappidoth's wife to accompany him as he attempts to fill the command of the all-powerful God (who needs no assistance) to lead in the capturing of Sisera, arises. Does this request imply that Barak was weak? Why was it written as such? Is this an elevation of women above men? What does this say about the roles of the sexes during that era? What was the nature of Barak's necessity for Deborah's accompaniment?

Barak's expressed need for Deborah is symbolic of a few concepts. First, it symbolizes the dependency of the fearful willing upon the faithful. While the Oxford Bible Commentary makes no mention of Deborah's engagement in battle, it asserts that it was quite common to have the holy person present in a military setting.¹⁵ The warrior's

¹⁴Gillis Gerleman, "The Song of Deborah in the Light of Stylistics," *Vetus testamentum* 1 no 3 (July 1951): 171.

¹⁵*The Oxford Bible Commentary*, s.v. "Judges 5".

perception of a holy person's elevated level of faith plays a key role in the warrior's expected outcome of a war situation. The Hebrew translation of the name *Deborah* is *bee*, as it pertains to systematic instincts.¹⁶ In chapter eight of his book, *Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin discusses the possible variations in the instincts of bees. He notes that recently scientists have determined that bees, too, possess variable instincts; they now will substitute various substances, such as oatmeal for pollen when pollen is unavailable.¹⁷ Deborah displays intuitive instinct¹⁸ as she immediately reassigned, upon Barak's hesitation, the task of defeating Sisera to a woman.

Deborah is a prophetess, who relays the messages of God; for in Judges 4:6, she credits God for the instructions she is about to share with Barak. Judges are notorious for their high-spiritedness,¹⁹ and therefore their close connection with God. In fact, the nomenclature of the book of Judges derives from the twelve spirit-filled, bellicose, social-ruling leaders who were raised up by God to deliver the nation of Israel, which had no centralized authority.²⁰ Gardner speaks of Barak's immense fear of Sisera, an indication of his limited levels of faith, trust, and belief in God, which contrast to Deborah's immense faith and commitment to the Lord as they pertain to the restoration of the Lord's honorable name and to making Israel victorious once again.²¹ In requesting Deborah's presence, Barak, who is fearful, is relying on Deborah, who is faithful. The implication

¹⁶*The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words*, s.v., "Deborah."

¹⁷Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, <http://www.marxist.org/reference/archive/Darwin/works/origins/ch08.html> (accessed December 15, 2009).

¹⁸Jdg 4:8-9 (KJV).

¹⁹*The New Unger's Bible Handbook*, Student ed., s.v., "Judges 1-5."

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*New International Encyclopedia of Bible Characters*, s.v., "Deborah."

here is that when one who is doubtful in the faith is accompanied and led by one who is strong in faith, the strength of the faithful will somehow influence the faithless' development of courage, and lead to his/her eventual triumph over his/her fears.

Drama, an even greater extension of spoken word communication, can serve the same purpose of leading the faithless in times of despair to courage acquisition that enables them to act according to God's commands. In addition to encouraging the faithful, the infusion of scripture-focused dramatic presentations into regular worship provides for a viable exchange of Christian pedagogy between the faithful and the faithless, which purports to influence their courage and faith, so that they, too, may act in ways that are reflective of God's commands.

Secondly, Barak's expressed need for Deborah symbolizes interdependency between male and female, so as to place them on equal footing in God's sight. Paul Gardner, in his book, *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Characters*, explains that Deborah is the sole female judge to be mentioned from that era.²² Judges were usually men. Yet, Deborah, a woman, was entrusted with the title and the job, an indication of the nonbiased nature of Yahweh. Athalya Brenner, in her essay, "A Triangle and a Rhombus in Narrative Structure: A Proposed Integrative Reading of Judges IV and V," supports the researcher's belief that this narration purports to exclude gender biases, as she discusses the parallelism between chapters four and five. Because in chapter four, male dominance is evident, and in chapter five, female dominance is evident, Brenner suggests that there is equal footing amongst the genders.²³ She concludes that the cooperation between the

²²*New International Encyclopedia of Bible Characters*, s.v., "Deborah."

²³Athalya Brenner, "A Triangle and a Rhombus in Narrative Structure: A Proposed Integrative Reading of Judges IV and V," *Vetus testamentum* 40 no 2 (April 1990): 137.

human and the divine is the dominant motif that is carried out without favoritism toward any sex or gender.²⁴ Brenner also examines the literary structure of Judges V by examining the cast of the narration, and determines that its six main players pair together to form an interactive triangle of representatives. Deborah and Barak occupy the first lower vertex and represent victorious Israel, while Jabin and Sisera are at the second lower vertex, and they represent the defeated Canaanites.²⁵ God and Jael stand at the apex of the triangle, representing initiation and completion of the confrontation, respectively.²⁶ Thus, having women serve as God's messenger/initiator and conqueror in this narrative eliminates the criticism of male dominance in this narrative.

Thirdly, Barak's need for Deborah is symbolic of his belief that perhaps the Israelites would be punished even more harshly during this war with Sisera for disappointing God. The Old Testament is filled with the dominant belief in God's righteousness and his judgment of all nations and Israel.²⁷ While the ultimate goal of emancipation would result in the Israelites' restoration to righteousness through their deterrence from their repeated patterns of disappointment to God, Barak may have been burdened more by the Israelites' sins (for the period of Judges, which spans approximately 350 years, is notorious for its pattern of the people forsaking the Lord, as stated in Judges 2:13, and the Lord forsaking the people (Judges 2:23)).²⁸ It is possible

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., 130-31.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Owen C. Thomas and Ellen Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 203.

²⁸*The New Unger's Bible Handbook*, Student ed., s.v., "Judges 1-5."

that Barak saw Deborah's presence as some semblance of guaranteed protection, or guaranteed victory aide. This concern is unwarranted, however, according to Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, for in their book, *Introduction to Theology*, they suggest that just as God is righteous, God is also a savior, and will therefore save and vindicate Israel.²⁹ This was exactly what happened in Deborah's account. Another contradictory theory is given by Morris Seale in his essay, "Deborah's Ode and the Arabia Qasida." He suggests that God's deliverance in this account is an act of mercy, and not justice.³⁰ God showed mercy towards the Israelites as God delivered them yet again. In either case, however, it was God who delivered Israel. This aligns with the project because of the seniors' apprehension about trying something new in the church.

Lastly, Deborah's directive to both Barak and herself is an indication of conjunction of song and action, as they partner to accomplish an identified goal. Deborah utters a song; then Barak takes action by igniting freedom efforts. Thus, Deborah's musical declaration and directive both emphasize the necessity or role of song as it pertains to the ignition of liberation to God's satisfaction, which eventually occurs as a result of Barak's attempt to lead Sisera into captivity.

Using song, Deborah calls Barak to action here and tells him to arise. The English word arise, derives from the Hebrew word, *zârach*, meaning to rise, [which requires movement or action] or to be bright.³¹ When comparing different English translations of Judges 5: 12, one notable difference stands out. As Deborah instructs Barak regarding his

²⁹*The New Unger's Bible Handbook*, Student ed., s.v., "Judges 1-5."

³⁰Morris S. Seale, "Deborah's Ode and the Arabia Qasida," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 81 no 4 (December 1962): 345.

³¹*The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words*, s.v., "Arise."

captor, Sisera, in the King James, Living Bible, and New Revised Standard Version, she speaks of Barak leading him away. According to Strong, to lead, in English, means to guide.³² Barak indeed led Sisera toward his demise; for in Judges 4: 12, Sisera, with his nine hundred chariots and men, immediately followed Barak to Mount Tabor. It is here that Deborah does even more with her instrument of song, as well. Deborah not only calls Barak to action, but she also, through the use of her artistic instrument, addresses his character. As the descendent of Abinoam, whose name translates in Hebrew as gracious,³³ Barak possesses by inheritance the quality of graciousness. He demonstrates his graciousness and selflessness as he accepts Deborah's charge regarding Sisera with the knowledge that he will not be the one getting the recognition for Sisera's defeat.³⁴ The seniors in Immanuel Bethel must graciously accept the challenge of allowing drama during worship in order for the desired end of attraction of youth to the church to occur.

As this project centers on the attraction of youth back to the church, the necessity of the children to know the word of God must be examined, as well. Deborah does so in her reference to him as the son of Abinoam. Son translates in Greek as *tēknōn*, meaning child.³⁵ In Hebrew it translates as *bēn* which means son, descendent, or people.³⁶ It also can be interpreted to mean quality or condition.³⁷ It is here that the focus upon youth

³²*The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words*, s.v., "Lead."

³³*The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words*, s.v., "Abinoam."

³⁴Jdg 4:9 (KJV).

³⁵*The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words*, s.v., "Son."

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷*Ibid.*

exegetes. Barak is referred to as someone's child. He is told to take action for the liberation of others. Today's youth are called to responsibility as disciples, as well. Utilizing youth as instruments in dramatic presentation of biblical content locates them within the worship service in a way that is nonthreatening to seniors, and provides them with invaluable purpose, which the researcher believes will sustain their interest and attendance in the church.

Deborah's lyrical application, that is, her reference to Barak's kinship to Abinoam is an illustration of yet another way the use of drama can be effective. Used in worship, drama, as it aligns synonymously with song under the umbrella of the performing arts, can serve to emphasize, encourage, and guide in the development of character traits among the faithless, illiterate, and more, just as the researcher proposes that Deborah did with her song. The use of an art form, the song, is directly aligned with the ignition to action. Just as the art form of song, as it was asserted by Deborah, led to action in antiquity, the researcher believes that the art form of dramatic interpretation and presentation can lead to action today, the action of becoming followers of Christ.

While Judges V, also known as Deborah's Song,³⁸ is referred to by scholars as one of the oldest texts in the Hebrew Bible,³⁹ its historicity, as it relates to Judges 4, remains unsolved. In fact, there exist many conflicting hypotheses as to which chapter came first. In *The New Unger's Bible Handbook*, Merrill F. Unger's sole description of Judges, chapter five, is that it is a fiery lyric recount of chapter four,⁴⁰ suggesting that

³⁸John Barton and John Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press), 181.

³⁹Harrington, 432.

⁴⁰Unger., *Bible Handbook*, 63.

chapter IV was written first. In his essay entitled, "A Structural and Literal Analysis of the Song of Deborah," Michael David Coogan takes a neutral stance, as he attempts to answer the question of why there exist two accounts of the same event. He refers to the hypothesis that "at some point in the Song of Deborah's historic transmission, someone (a poet) made sense of it as a poem,"⁴¹ a hypothesis that confirms neither chapter four nor five as original. It is even unclear as to whether Deborah's song was written closely after the events. In his essay, "Composition of the Song of Deborah," Peter Ackroyd asserts that nearly a century may lie between the poetic account of the story and the actual events, thus rendering its dating an unconfirmed presumption.⁴² Brenner insists that the historicity question remains unanswered and suggests that the two texts are indeed parallel, yet strikingly different, asserting that their relationship is literary as opposed to being historical.⁴³ As evidential agreement, most researchers have resorted to focusing upon the literary nature of the book of Judges as opposed to the historical.

Again, the mere existence of prophetess Deborah's poetic recapitulation suggests that there is a degree of importance in the instrument of song. Throughout the Bible there is evidence of song and multiple genres of the arts being employed for a myriad of purposes—from praise and worship to lamentation. Songs were sung in praise and worship to God after some victorious accomplishment. Moses, Miriam, and the Israelites sang unto the Lord after their enemies had been washed into the sea.⁴⁴ Hannah's prayer to

⁴¹ Michael David Coogan, "Structural and Literary Analysis of the Song of Deborah," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40, no 2 (Apr 1978): 144.

⁴² Peter R. Ackroyd, "Composition of the Song of Deborah," *Vetus testamentum* 2 no 2 (April 1952,):161.

⁴³ Brenner, 129.

⁴⁴ Ex 15:1-27 (KJV).

God, also called Hannah's Song,⁴⁵ praises God for reversing her barrenness and blessing her with her son, Samuel.⁴⁶ Deborah sang a celebratory song of praise to God for God's work.⁴⁷ Songs of lament are also evident in the Bible, as Jeremiah grieved the loss of King Josiah after he greatly reformed Jerusalem and died in battle.⁴⁸

While choral engagements in song occur frequently in the Bible, another arts category, monologues, can also be found. Elizabeth and Mary each speak their sacred monologues upon Mary's arrival at Elizabeth's home in Judea, as the birth of Jesus is foretold,⁴⁹ while Zacharias speaks his prophetic monologue upon the birth of John the Baptist.⁵⁰ Moreover, the singing of songs was used as an instrument of measuring one's character. As he instructs them regarding their renunciation of their self-serving ways, Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, attributes the singing of psalms, hymns, and spirituals to those who are spirit-filled.⁵¹

Dance, a third genre of the arts, is also widely evident throughout the Bible. There was dancing at feasts and celebrations. David and the Israelites danced excitedly after he was selected King under God's approval and the approval of the Israelites.⁵² Dancing was employed in idol worship, for as Moses returned from the mountain, he found the people

⁴⁵Unger, *Bible Handbook*, 69.

⁴⁶1 Sm 2:1-11 (KJV).

⁴⁷A. Graeme Auld. *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth: The Daily Study Bible Series* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984), 157.

⁴⁸2 Chr35:25 (KJV).

⁴⁹Lk 1:42-55 (KJV).

⁵⁰Lk 1: 78-79 (KJV).

⁵¹Eph 5: 18-20 (KJV).

⁵²1 Chr 13:8 (KJV).

of Israel dancing and worshiping the golden calf-god.⁵³ Herodias' daughter danced before Herod, a dance that was so pleasing to him that he agreed to give her whatever it was that she requested, ultimately the beheading of John-the-Baptist and presentation of his head to her.⁵⁴

More than any other arts genre, the playing of instruments is displayed throughout the biblical narrative. Trumpets and psalteries are used in Daniel 3:5, 7, 10, and 15. The playing of trumpets can also be found in Numbers 20:2, and Nehemiah 12:35. Timbrels/tambourines are used as instruments of praise in Exodus 15:20, Judges 11:34, 1 Samuel 18:6, and Psalms 68:25. Harps, lutes, and other stringed instruments are found in 1Chronicles 13:8, Nehemiah 12:27, and Isaiah 23:16. While there are other instruments in the Bible, the researcher's point can be made using the above listings.

What is absent from the biblical narrative, however, is the artistic literary genre of dramatic interpretation. In fact, the term, drama, is missing from James Strong's *The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words*, and Merrill Unger's *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, both exhaustive references to biblical terminology; the term is found in language absentia from John H. Kohlenberger's *The Concise Concordance to the New Revised Standard Version*,⁵⁵ as well. Even when listed as a keyword in todays technological search engines, the term drama in the Bible produces zero findings. In researching the word play, cross-references were given to music in both the Strong⁵⁶ and

⁵³Ex 32:19 (KJV).

⁵⁴Mt 14:6-10 (KJV).

⁵⁵John R. Kohlenberger, III, ed. *The Concise Concordance to the New Revised Standard Version* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1993), 83. Where as in the word drama would be found on page 83 according to alphabetical order, it is not.

⁵⁶*The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words*, s.v., "Music."

Unger resources.⁵⁷ Therefore, the question must be raised regarding the significance of dramatic interpretation as it pertains to the word of God. Does drama have a place in biblical interpretation and/or revelation? Does it have a significant place in worship? The researcher believes that it does.

The *Mercer Commentary on the Bible* suggests that as Psalm 150 renders instructions for giving praise to God with the various instruments, what it is really doing is stressing the value of music and instruments in worship.⁵⁸ Their ultimate purpose is that of worship. In fact, the *Mercer Commentary on the Bible* insists that “All of them (instruments) are called to the service of divine praise. Priest and laity, indeed *everything that breathes*, is exhorted to praise Yahweh. Praising God is the goal of all life, of every living thing. Psalm 146-150 tell us that the proper mode of existence of humankind and all creation is relatedness to God. And praise is indispensable for that mode.”⁵⁹

This instructive explication encompasses evidence of the appropriateness of drama in worship. While the term, drama, is not employed verbatim, it qualifies categorically. If creation’s proper mode of existence is found in its relatedness to God, then as drama is yet another art form created by humans, and thus inherently by God, it must be used in relation to God, as well. Just as one is blessed with gifts of song and instrumentation, one can also be blessed with the gift of acting. If one uses his/her gifts of song and instrumentation to praise God, then can one also use one’s gift of dramatic interpretation. Categorically as an art form or a gift, dramatic presentation fits in the worship scheme of things.

⁵⁷Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, s.v., “Play.”

⁵⁸*Mercer Commentary on the Bible*, s.v. “Psalm 150.”

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

Even further, the presentation of drama in worship has far-reaching implications and purports to serve as a powerful modality of Christian education. The most important benefit of the infusion of dramatic arts in worship is that of its capability to ignite awareness and potentially long-term knowledge and wisdom of the Word of God. In his essay entitled “The Arts in Worship,” John P. Newport discusses the dangers and values of arts infusion in worship. While he concedes that on many accounts the creative arts world has been manipulative in creating distorted and harmful art forms, he credits the arts for being instrumental in enabling Christians to interpret and understand the Bible more adequately.⁶⁰

Even more specifically, the main determinant of the effectiveness or success of the infusion of dramatic presentation into the worship service at Immanuel Bethel is that of its adherence to biblical content. First, there is great concern that worshipers have knowledge of the word of God in order that they might be led towards forming a relationship with God. Secondly, members expressed concern about maintaining the character of the service; that is, not changing the basic elements of the worship service. This can be done through dramatic presentations rooted in and based strictly upon Biblical content. While the presentation itself would be an additional element in worship, it categorically reflects the nature of Immanuel Bethel’s worship style in that is biblically-focused. In Hebrew, the name, Barak, translates as *āshar*, which literally means to be straight. Barak was straightforward as he told Deborah of the conditions upon which he would follow her directive. Deborah was straightforward with Barak as she told him that he would not get the glory for his efforts. The word of God is straightforward, and therefore, it should be presented in a way that is straightforward. It is

⁶⁰John P. Newport, “The Arts in Worship,” *Review & Expositor* 80, no 1(Winter, 1983): 72.

imperative that when biblical content is brought before the worshipers, that it is as straightforward as the Bible itself, illuminating the word of God without frills and useless additives that often deflect from its emancipatory messages. Judges 5:12 gives insight to the argument that drama, as it falls under the umbrella of the artistic form, has as much of a place in the praise and worship of God, as well as serving as a tool for education and discipleship. There is a direct correlation between scripture-awareness, the arts, and worshippers' afflatus to Godly action; thus, the infusion of drama or dramatic presentation in worship today can serve as a vital tool in the ignition of emancipatory learning amongst believers and nonbelievers, both young and old, literate and illiterate—learning that will guide them into positive decision-making, faith building, character development, and knowledge attainment.

The New Testament scriptural basis for this project, James 1: 25 —“But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget, but doers who act — they will be blessed in their doing,”⁶¹ speaks more specifically to the importance of keeping in high esteem the word of God. As Paul emphatically stresses in his letter to the Colossians that the source of all wisdom and understanding is in Jesus' person, he instructs them on their allowance of Jesus' word to dwell in them.⁶² John Frederick Johnson incorporates Colossae's apostolic tradition as Jesus Christ. In his essay, “The Apostolic Tradition in Colossae: Christology in Action,” he states that in Jesus Christ, all treasures, knowledge and wisdom have been revealed.⁶³

⁶¹ Jas 1: 25 (NRSV).

⁶² Col 3: 16 (KJV).

⁶³ John Frederick Johnson, “The Apostolic Tradition in Colossae: Christology in Action,” *Concordia Journal* (April, 2005): 129.

If members of the church at Colossae and members of today's congregations allow the word of God to dwell in them, then they will hold the keys to wisdom, as well; in addition, they will not be able to be dissuaded from the Gospel. The problem arises with the assumption that all of the Colossian followers of Christ are familiar with Christ's teachings, an assumption that cannot be made of all worshipers in the church. In fact, some churches neglect to provide Christian education to its worshipers and thus, are filled on Sunday mornings with worshipers unfamiliar with God's word. In fact, the study of the Bible has declined rapidly in recent years in many Protestant churches.⁶⁴ As far back as 1988, liberal churches could attest to having had only 8.5 percent of its members as daily readers of the Bible, 17.6 percent as weekly readers, and 59 percent as monthly Bible readers.⁶⁵

In his essay, "The Beginning of Education," Mark Galli describes one who possesses biblical literacy as one who categorically considers the Bible as a book, is familiar with the Bible's most popular characters, phrases, and narratives, and connects their cognition in literature.⁶⁶ With such low percentages, it is imperative that churches present the Bible as authentically and as often as possible to its parishioners. Richard Osmer supports this belief in his essay entitled, "The Study of Scripture in the Congregation: Old Problems and New Programs," for he quotes John Calvin as saying,

Let this be a firm principle: No other word is to be held as the Word of God, and given place as such in the church, than what is

⁶⁴Richard R. Osmer, "The Study of Scripture in the Congregation: Old Problems and New Programs," *Interpretation* 42 no 3 (Jul 1988): 254.

⁶⁵Ibid., 255.

⁶⁶Mark Galli, "The Beginning of Education," *Christianity Today*, (October, 2008): 79.

contained first in the Law and the Prophets, then in the writings of the apostles; and the only authorized way of teaching in the church is by the prescription and standard of his Word.⁶⁷

This assertion gives scripture full authority over all other resources. With that as the case, why, then is there such a decline? Osmer attributes it to the onslaught of thought on the diminishing relativity of the scriptures of antiquity to present-day situations.⁶⁸ Today's congregation members must see the relevance between the scriptures and today's life. Churches have to create ways of teaching and reaching their congregations. If today's churches are going to try at all to abide by these guidelines, then some radical changes must be made regarding how the Bible is taught—specifically in ways that will attract new learners. This project, *Acting to Act, A Youth-Centered, Drama-infused Paradigm of Christian education that Reflects Scripture and Ignites Emancipatory Learning*, presents a new way of teaching the Bible in worship, and in a way that attracts new learners.

James 1:25, emphasizes the importance of making acquaintance with the word of God and adds an applicative dimension to its familiarity. It states, "But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget, but doers who act, they will be blessed in their doing."⁶⁹ Look translates in Hebrew as *parakuptō*,⁷⁰ which means to lean over as to peer within. Worshipers are called to look deeply into the word of God to see how it relates to their lives. Dramatic presentation that

⁶⁷Galli, 254.

⁶⁸Ibid., 255.

⁶⁹Jas 1:25 (NRSV).

⁷⁰*Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible: King James Version*, Revised ed., s.v. "Look."

is revelatory of Biblical content provides the opportunity for worshipers to peer into the word of God.

Overall, the book of James aims to address the moral aspects of Christianity with its cautionary reprimands and provocative urges.⁷¹ Perfect is translated in Greek as *telios*, meaning complete.⁷² The word of God is complete and needs no additives. This project purports to reflect scripture without frills and unnecessary additives in an attempt to honor the notion of completeness of the word. While costumes and props are used to adequately depict setting, very few changes or enhancements were made to the narratives, themselves.

Law translates *nōmōs* in Greek meaning a regulation, principle, or through the idea of prescriptive usage.⁷³ This means that not only are they to become familiar with God's word by seeing it or hearing it, but they are also expected to continue their lives in operation [persevere] under the principles of God's prescriptive regulations [law]. James is advocating for demonstrative responses in the form of actions that reflect one's thinking. Osmer suggests that it is this very principle—the application of the scriptures in current situations that is missing from the majority of Christian education programs.⁷⁴ It is here where the impact of the applicability of scriptures is greatest evidenced. Rowan Williams explains in his article, "On Making Moral Decisions," that believers are not distracted by questions usually pondered before one makes a decision, due to the notion that they possess senses of maturity and discernment on which actions will continue to

⁷¹ *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible: King James Version*, Revised ed., 1528.

⁷² *Ibid.*, s.v. "Perfect."

⁷³ *Ibid.*, s.v. "Law."

⁷⁴ Osmer, 259.

render them faithful to their acknowledged truths.⁷⁵ This means that believers will make decisions based on what they know from their Christian education. In order to decide according to the beliefs of their faiths, believers must first know the Word of God. The exposure to the word of God via dramatic presentation will provide the biblical narratives in a way that will serve as a contributive influence over the hearers' subsequent decision-making, or thoughts.

James gives a clear, nominal distinction to God's word, describing it as the law of liberty. The Greek word for liberty is *ēlēutheria*, or freedom.⁷⁶ God's word will provide freedom to its seers if they continue in it (continueth, translates in Greek as *as paramenō*. *Paramenō* means to stay near, be permanent, persevere, and tarry.)⁷⁷ It is within these semantics where the expected action is located. Upon seeing the word of God and upon understanding the word of God, onlookers are expected to act; by staying near, persevering in or presenting the word of God. James instructs them not to become forgetful hearers. In Greek, to refer to one as forgetful, is to say that he/she is *ēpilēsmōnē* or negligent.⁷⁸ A hearer, or *akrōates*, in Greek, is one who listens and understands.⁷⁹ James is instructing those who are aware and understanding of the word of God against negligence toward it. Instead, he instructs them to become doers who act. Doer translates

⁷⁵Rowan Williams, “On Making Moral Decisions,” *Anglican Theological Review* 81 no 2 (Spring, 1999): 297.

⁷⁶*Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible: King James Version*, Revised ed., s.v., “Liberty.”

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, s.v., “Continueth.”

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, s.v., “Forgetful.”

⁷⁹*Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible: King James Version*, Revised ed., s.v., “Hearer.”

as the Greek word *pōiētēs*, meaning performer.⁸⁰ God's word is to remain on the minds of believers, to the point that it transforms them into doers of God's word. Not only must the followers of Jesus look into the perfect law of the Lord, but they must commit to doing, making, practicing, and even performing God's word. Hence, Acting to Act... demonstrates this entire concept, as it places God's word on the minds of the actors and worshipers, attracting many to want to learn/see/hear more, and transforms the actors into literal performers of the word. Dramatic presentations, acting, are performed during worship for the purpose of igniting the actions of its viewers on behalf of God. Its viewers, in turn, act as they make their life decisions daily in ways that please God and illuminate God's word.

Finally, James gives the assurance of God's action in response to the viewer's actions, as being that of a blessing. The verse continues, "... they will be blessed in their doing."⁸¹ Those who adhere to the assertions of this passage are promised blessings of God, merely for their obedience—another emancipator motivator. Dramatic presentation of the word of God is indeed another form of the preached word, propping its beam securely in place in the structure of the worship service.

James 1:19-25 addresses God's Word and life's trials. Unger asserts one of its five directives as receiving the word of God.⁸² Worshipers cannot receive that of which they are unaware. In fact, Romans 10:13-14⁸³ issues the promise of salvation to those who call upon the Lord, while posing the question of the possibility of calling on someone with

⁸⁰Ibid., s.v., "Doer."

⁸¹Jas 1:25 (NRSV).

⁸²*The New Unger's Bible Handbook*, Student ed., s.v., "James:1."

⁸³Rom 10:13-14 (KJV).

whom the people are unfamiliar -- "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"⁸⁴ When the preacher focuses on only a snippet of scripture and employs dramatic presentations, those presentations infused into worship provide the educational balance to worshipers who are unfamiliar with the word of God, or the simple, as asserted in Proverbs.⁸⁵ These worshipers will be provided the opportunity to see and hear the word of God for themselves, and thus have scriptural resources to which to refer when faced with difficult situations. They then will be more inclined to act according to the teachings of their faith.

Theological Foundation

The descriptive declarations in this project's title—*Acting to Act: A Youth-centered, Drama-infused Paradigm of Christian education that Reflects Scripture and Ignites Emancipatory Learning*, inform the reader of its methodological components that will accomplish the specific purpose of Acting to Act, or acting to ignite action. This theological foundations essay will serve to dissect these methodological aspects, asserting the implications of their inclusion in this project, and any church worship service, as well as discussing the past and present theological positions that support and/or refute each.

The task of attracting and maintaining youth in church membership in this age of contemporary worship is one with which Immanuel Bethel and many other congregations struggle; one which, when carried out successfully, will have significant implications for youth and the worshiping body as a whole. As churches evolve and elders pass on, it is

⁸⁴Rom 10:14 (KJV).

⁸⁵Prv 8:5 (KJV).

youth who will serve as leaders of the church, and carry on the church's character, and move the church into its next chapter.

That this project is youth-centered is imperative only as it pertains to the researcher's context at Immanuel Bethel. Its focus on youth becomes optional as it is employed in various contexts. In fact, this paradigm can be utilized across ages and cultures and remain equally as effective in providing a differentiated modality of Christian education. It is geared neither stylistically nor linguistically toward children or youth, for doing so would only limit its effective possibilities. However, when applicable, this paradigm, *Acting to Act: A Youth-centered, Drama-infused Paradigm of Christian education that Reflects Scripture and Ignites Emancipatory Learning*, can serve as the dominant instrument for attracting, educating, transforming, and retaining youth, as its utilization is purported in the researcher's context at Immanuel Bethel. Here, the researcher will discuss the importance of attracting and retaining youth in the church, specifically, Immanuel Bethel UCC.

While Immanuel Bethel's imperative is that of attracting youth to carry forth the work of the church due to its aging population, there are other youth-centered imperatives that compel us to attract youth back to the church and teach them the ways of Christ. One of the main reasons is that of guidance. That adults should have their hands in the lives of children is not a new concept. Even in antiquity, the importance of guiding youth was known and stressed, for Proverbs 22:6 instructs adults to "Train up a child in the way he (she) should go: and when he (she) is old, he (she) will not depart from it."⁸⁶ The commentary in the Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible suggests that this instruction

⁸⁶ Prv 22: 6 (KJV).

has two possible options—that the child must be devoted to God, and/or that adults must prepare the child for the responsibilities he/she will face when he/she becomes an adult.⁸⁷

Deuteronomy 6 echoes the importance of guiding children, as it repeatedly issues directives on the guidance of children, the importance of the obedience of God's word, and the blessing of righteousness that results when the word of God is obeyed.⁸⁸

However, even if in the church, the mindset of worshiping Christians is changed to acknowledge the value of youth, there is no guarantee that priority will be placed on relaying this message to youth during worship. That youth get this message is imperative.

Adult Christians must not only seek to achieve their own essence of worship experience, which according to Candi Dugas-Crawford is attained through their encounter with God,⁸⁹ but they also must see to it that the experience is such that youth's needs are fulfilled, as well. Dugas-Crawford sees worship as the place where one meets, feels, knows, hears, touches, sees, and tastes God.⁹⁰ Adult Christians have their prior knowledge to serve as the foundation for the ignition of the sensory experience of worship. Children must be guided toward the experience. The infusion of drama in worship the second descriptive component of this paradigm is the method through which this guidance-toward-knowledge-of-Christ's-love imperative can be met.

⁸⁷ Spiros Zodhiates, ThD., ed. *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible*, (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1991), 821.

⁸⁸ Dt 6 (NRSV).

⁸⁹ Candi Dugas-Crawford, "Taste and See the God of Your Ancestors: Drama in the African-American Church," *Journal of Interdenominational Theological Center* 27, no 1-2 (Fall/Spring 1999 to 2000), 186.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

This discussion of addressing children's needs of spiritual guidance, valuation, love, and acceptance, falls under Fernando Arzola's liberal youth ministry paradigm. In such a youth ministry, a ministry of compassion is what is most emphasized,⁹¹ for its aim is primarily to build a ministry that is felt-needs-centered, beginning first with the felt-needs of youth, and then moving outward.⁹² Arzola believes that due to the compassionate nature of the liberal youth ministry paradigm, the one evaluative question to be asked is that of defining how the needs of the urban youth are being met. Arzola suggests that most churches offer activities such as field trips, sleepovers, arts and crafts creations, choirs, retreats, mentoring, homogeneous support groups, and family-centered initiatives, in efforts to foster greater self-understanding and awareness.⁹³

While sleepovers, retreats, family gatherings, and support groups have served as functional ministries for youth in the past, they often consisted of thematic-based activities which briefly present Scriptural passages and neglect to delve into a single pericope. The inclusion and infusion of drama in worship provide a platform for youth to demonstrate creative expression, while simultaneously experiencing the word of God. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul discusses the many gifts of the Spirit. In 1Corinthians 12:33, he instructs them to strive for the greater gifts. For Paul, these greater gifts are amongst the gifts that enhance the congregation.⁹⁴ The provision of insight into the scriptures through dramatic interpretation will be a positive, up-building addition to any congregation.

⁹¹ Fernando Arzola, Jr., *Toward a Prophetic Youth Ministry: Theory and Praxis in Urban Context* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 22.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Arzola, 22.

⁹⁴HarperCollins Study Bible, (NRSV), s.v. "1 Cor 12: 33."

Arzola believes that the informing principle and ideology of liberal youth ministry are those of growth and evolution, respectively. The question must be raised, whether youth are experiencing healthy growth. The evolution ideology asserts that adaptations and changes in youth ministry must be made if healthy growth is going to be promoted, and the personal and emotional needs of youth be met.⁹⁵ It is here that the researcher's project seems most appropriate.

Arzola likens his liberal youth ministry to the Sadducees, for they both are committed to personal growth, development of their intellect and stability of their emotions. He states that while youth are taught to respect the scriptures, they are taught with less accentuation on the divinity of the scriptures' authoritativeness. The researcher disagrees with this assertion. *Acting to Act...* provides instructional lessons that address the aforementioned points made by Arzola.

The descriptor, drama-infusion, is indicative of the researcher's belief that if drama is infused into the worship service, then transformation will take place – transformation, which according to Dugas-Crawford occurs as a result of the sensory engagement the worshiper has with God.⁹⁶ Worship is not only a place where God and Christ are celebrated and where worshipers are transformed, but it is also the convenient and most available time to provide Christian education to the entire congregation. At Immanuel Bethel during any given Bible study session, one might find no more than five to ten congregants, and even fewer children. Therefore, during worship is a most appropriate time to provide Christian education to the congregants.

⁹⁵Arzola, 23.

⁹⁶Dugas-Crawford, 186.

Drama should be infused into worship because it presents a threefold process of action for achieving the four goals of attracting, educating, transforming, and retaining youth. First, the creatively expressionistic nature of the project challenges youth by encouraging them to expand beyond their usual boundaries. It therefore heightens the interests of youth and thus serves as an attractor. The infusion of drama is also attractive to youth because it provides a platform for youth to engage in purposeful ministry, thus developing a sense of self-worth. This project also serves as an educator about the word of God, to the point at which they are informed and transformed through their learning. While there are elements of worship that address the aural and visual modalities of learning, such as singing and the reading of scripture, which may be suitable for adults, there are few activities that address the kinesthetic modality of learning of early childhood facts, which is necessary in order to reach youth. Various worship styles are necessary in order to reach youth. Tex Sample echoes the need for the inclusion of varied components in worship, if children are going to be included. In his book, *The Spectacle of Worship in a Wired World*, Sample describes today's children as being "wired with circuits" that are unrecognizable to the previous generation; and asserts that as a result, children's learning, memory, thought, and analysis processes work differently.⁹⁷ He advocates for the accommodation of youth's needs in worship. Infusing drama into worship is one way of promoting this accommodation.

Mozelle Clark Sherman quotes writer Northrop Fry as he expounds on the experiential educational process that takes place when employing dramatic presentation in worship. Fry writes,

⁹⁷Tex Sample. *The Spectacle of Worship in a Wired World: Electronic Culture and the Gathered People of God* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 14.

When drama is integrated into worship... meaning overflows the moment. Product becomes process.... The drama of learning that changes lives begins. In church drama, we have the freedom of giving ourselves to the process while we let the process take care of itself. We can shape the process for the sake of learning that changes lives rather than for the sake of the product... we can seize and create opportunities for challenge in affirmation, for experiential learning... when it comes to learning from experience, being in a play is the next best thing to actual living, and seeing one the next best thing after that.⁹⁸

This means that learning is taking place among the actors as they seek to portray the content with meaning. Learning takes place amongst the worshiping audience as they seek to find meaning in the content portrayed. Fredericka Berger, in her essay, "Spiritual Formation through Drama," discusses the significance character has within drama. She asserts that character is the main inducer of power within a drama, and that characterization's richness is the trademark for a first-rate drama.⁹⁹ Berger suggests that the existential living nature of drama is its primary strength as an instructional tool; it is life, it is existence, and its present tense, lived through the duration of the presentation.¹⁰⁰

Berger insists that the audience experiences real life as they watch a play, and that drama is art in that it is an aesthetic awakening-- learning that is too often diminished despite its provision of a well-validated path to increased spirituality.¹⁰¹ Again, the infusion of drama in worship has an immeasurable educational value.

⁹⁸ Mozelle Clark Sherman, "Life More Abundant: The Dramatic Worship Experience," *Review and Expositor* 90 (1993): 279.

⁹⁹ Fredericka Berger, "Spiritual Formation through Drama," *Arts* 15, no 1 (2003): 35.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

The second process of action that is brought about through the infusion of drama during worship is that of bridging the gap between youth and the adults. As it has been established that youth are an essential part of the congregation, it can be concluded that their utilization as actors can provide an invaluable ministry.

In her essay, "A Theology of Children," Iris V. Cully asserts that children bring life and represent life, and through their honest expression of feeling, have been known to bring new perspectives to adults.¹⁰² This means that the utilization of children in dramatic presentations during worship establishes a medium of communication between youth and the adults. In his essay entitled "Using Drama in Worship," Robert Howard Clausen discusses a mystical transference of energy that occurs during a dramatic presentation. He states that the usual separation between actors and audiences, and/or performers and spectators is not as cut and dry as one might think. He believes that there is a reciprocal giving and receiving transaction that occurs during a dramatic production; even in dramas without audible response, there is an energy flowing from audience to the actor, which can be felt by the actor.¹⁰³ When children are used as actors, they become the agents of this transference, which is one of the many gifts children bring. Cully suggests that adults in any congregation must ask themselves whether they desire to receive the gifts that children bring to worship; and upon positive reception of their gifts, adult congregants are called to the responsibility of guiding the children toward recognition of, response to, and

¹⁰²Iris V. Cully, "A Theology of Children," *Review & Expositor* 80, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 210.

¹⁰³Robert Howard Clausen, "Using Drama During Worship," *Concordia Journal* (November 1977): 247.

eventual life commitment to God.¹⁰⁴ This assumption of responsibility provides a bridge of communication between youth and adults.

The third word in the process of action that occurs as drama is infused into worship is the emancipation of congregants through their experiences with the word of God. Clausen sees worship as an activity that serves to promote spiritual growth in those who participate.¹⁰⁵ This means that only those who actively participate in worship will experience spiritual growth. The implication of this assertion in this project is that only the actors will experience spiritual growth, as they are the active participants. The researcher argues, however, that there is a passive level of participation by on-looking congregants as they view and listen to the word of God in search of information that may assist them with whichever situation in which they find themselves. Thus, the researcher disagrees with Clausen's assertion of participation as a prerequisite to spiritual growth.

The participation can be categorized as active or passive. There are congregants who attend church for formality's sake, looking to gain nothing [inactive], and who are not participating in the dramatic presentation as actors, but who often find themselves leaving worship with a heightened sense of spiritual awareness. Augustine disagrees with the researcher's suggestion. For Augustine, this passive spiritual awareness does not occur, but rather, just the opposite occurred. Augustine dismissed theater altogether due to what he believed was its negative impact on the church's health; he believed that the theater evoked an emotional stimulation that implied "an insidious form of self-indulgence; it also alleviates onlookers need to act, and thus increases their passivity and

¹⁰⁴Cully, 210.

¹⁰⁵Clausen, 247.

narcissism.¹⁰⁶ This means that theater was responsible for creating a sense of unacceptable complacency amongst churchgoers. Augustine's distaste for theatre ignited an animosity toward actors as he attempted to distinguish the dramatic writings from the performers.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, resentment toward the theatre was aimed at the actors rather than the writers.¹⁰⁸ Augustine reconciled his disconnect with theater in his reclamation of truth of acting for theatre as a medium and a genre.¹⁰⁹

Mozelle Clark Sherman speaks of the contemporary composers of worship's various modes of expression's consideration of their work as ministry in response to the call of God—a call through which the ministry derives its sense of God's presence and transforming power that renews and directs.¹¹⁰ Writers believed that somehow through their encounters with, in their actions with, or viewership of their dramatic works, worshipers are transformed into agents concerned with helping the hungry, the naked, the homeless, and the prisoner.¹¹¹

Sherman explicates the transformative power of drama during worship. He asserts:

All of the arts have been the vehicles of the church's worship of God, nurturers of the faith of simple believers, and creators of the artistic symbols that bond individual Christian communities. [Art] stirs us, troubles us, delights us, breaks us, heals us, enraptures us, woos us... art awakens sweet and painful memories, opens old wounds, rekindles lost emotions, reintroduces abandoned values,

¹⁰⁶ Savidge, "A Survey of Christianity," 33.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Sherman, 279.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

points toward new horizons, and lures us beyond our present familiar landscape... to higher selves we have not yet become. In art, we hear the...voice of God. The news, the bard, the poet, the storyteller... facilitate the experiences of God and the growth of God's children in their spiritual lives.¹¹²

This means that as worshipers experience drama as an art form, they are escorted into spaces beyond their usual realm, taking them closer to God—or to a space of spiritual transformation. This space of spiritual transformation, when escorted there by actors, can be deemed in opposition to Plato's complaint about the immorality of actors—that actors were liars because they pretended to be someone they were not.¹¹³ He had a strong dislike for the way the body was used in dramatic presentations, for he saw it as an occupational hazard.¹¹⁴

Tertullian saw theatre itself as unreal and art trickery. In his *de Speculatus* of CE 197-202, he spoke harshly of theatre as a demonic plot to separate people and God for he believed that theatre's ability to arouse the emotions indicates the work of evil forces.¹¹⁵ It appears that Tertullian could not differentiate between acting and actuality, for he believed that if an actor portrayed an evil character; then evil was the nature of the actor's character in real life. Augustine could distinguish between the two, however, and did so by setting the motives behind the acting as the criteria. He resolved that in real life, acting is done for the purpose of deception; yet for the stage, it is done for mere pleasure.¹¹⁶

¹¹²Sherman, 279.

¹¹³Savidge, 33.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 32.

¹¹⁶Savidge, 33.

In his book, *Blended Worship*, Robert Webber discusses the creative worship found at Willow Creek Community Church. Like Arzola, he addresses felt-needs, but his concern is not only for youth, but also the congregation as a whole. He states that creative worship

...seeks to meet the felt needs of people in worship, to lift them out of their dislocations, and to relocate them in God and in the hope that they can have in the midst of life when they live in trust. Through worship like this, churches are helping people hear the voice of God in their lives and open themselves to a touch of transcendence.¹¹⁷

This means that, contrary to Plato's belief, as drama is infused into contemporary worship, the use of the body will not serve to hinder or harm the congregation in any way, but instead, it will serve to aid congregants in being transformed, and thus getting closer to God.

Aristotle separated philosophy, education, and politics from poetry by categorizing poetry's purpose as an aesthetic. He believed that morality was a vital component to the aesthetic experience, and asserts that artists should not attempt to educate themselves, morally or otherwise, but rather derive from their innate moral and ethical inclinations a work of art that pleases the audience.¹¹⁸ This leads into the discussion of the next descriptive component of this paradigmatic project.

The next descriptive component of this paradigm is that of its biblical focus or scripture reflection. What the researcher advocates is that the dramatic presentations infused into and used in worship are scripture-based as opposed to theme-based. The word of God is powerful as it stands alone. The presentation of the narratives as themes

¹¹⁷ Robert E. Webber. *Blended Worship: Achieving Substance and Relevance in Worship* (Peabody, MD: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 63.

¹¹⁸ Savidge, 34.

lends itself to the omission of much of the biblical content, and results in the failure to achieve the goal of making the optimal use of time in providing Christian education. It could also lend itself to the art of persuasion based upon the intended message. This idea of persuasive intent imposed from the pulpit has been a concern in the African-American community since the days of slavery.

In his book, *Black Theology and Black Power*, African-American theologian, James H. Cone, discusses the distortion of the message of Jesus Christ, as relayed in the white church. It is his concern that African-Americans were excluded from being deemed worthy recipients of the message of Christ. He states

Our chief difficulty in coping with the relationship between black power and Christian love arises from the theological failure to interpret the New Testament message of salvation in such a way that it will have meaning for oppressed Blacks in America. We still use, for the most part, traditional religious language, which was really created for a different age and, to a large degree, for the Western white society.¹¹⁹

Cone continues

The New Testament message of God's love to man is embedded in the forms totally alien to Blacks whose life experiences are unique to themselves. The message is presented to Blacks as if they shared the white cultural tradition. We still talk of salvation in white terms, love with a Western perspective, and thus never asked the question, what are the theological implications of God's love for the black man in America?¹²⁰

This suggests that there has been a barrier in communicating the word of God and the message of Christ to African Americans. Churches that house African Americans must find ways to speak to them in ways to which they can relate, ways that provide meaning.

¹¹⁹James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 49.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*

Again, meeting the needs of the congregation comes into play. It is not enough for churches to continue to do church by carrying out monotonous worship services that do not contain any information, music, etc., that will evoke thinking, feeling, and eventual transformation that ignites action amongst the congregants. He adds,

God's love is the initiator of the God-man fellowship in that there is no way from man to God, independent of agape [God's love for man]. Because of God's active love to man, man can now have fellowship with him.¹²¹

It is here where the significance of scripture-based dramatic presentations is revealed. As God's word is exhaustive to include all people, its message cannot be distorted, when adhered to by the writers and actors. African Americans need to be made aware of their worth in God's sight. This project focuses on the dramatic recitation of scripture using a verbatim presentation of John 3:16. The text tells of God's love for the entire world and the world's opportunity for salvation alleviating all possibilities for distortion.

John Newport echoes this belief as he asserts that the Bible is at the very heart of worship, and that the arts have aided Christians in their comprehension and interpretation of the Bible in a more adequate way.¹²² Being able to see the scriptures portrayed through dramatic presentation aids the worshipers and provides them with an informed, educational backdrop to which they can refer when facing life's challenges. Scott Haldeman, worship professor at Chicago Theological Seminary agrees that plays during worship may interpret the scriptures, but he does not insist that they do so. In fact, Haldeman places the presentation of Bible stories during worship on the same scale of

¹²¹Cone., 50.

¹²²Newport, 72.

importance as thematic presentations of life lessons.¹²³ This viewpoint conflicts with the researcher's viewpoint because of the subjectivity of the life lessons, and the potential for biased misinterpretations of the scriptures. Again, depicting the word of God without extra additives that change the pericope's meaning, minimizes the occurrences of misinterpretation. Haldeman's viewpoint also neglects to provide for passages of scripture that do not reveal stories, such as the Psalms and letters of Paul, which may be recited verbatim, but risk losing meaning if done thematically. Haldeman considers drama to be provocative, teaching good and bad lessons, both well and poorly. He does not address the consequences of poorly-taught lessons in worship, which could lead to errant decisions, actions, and attitudes on behalf of the receiving audiences. Where drama could risk its effectiveness is in the quality of its presentation. If done poorly, it renders itself as ineffective as any other poorly-depicted art form.

Dale Savidge suggests that there are at least three books in the Bible that exhibit evidence of dramatic structure. Evidence of dramatic structure is found in three historical narrations of the Old Testament. Savidge asserts that various people in these narratives play roles in order to achieve deception, and cites David's erratic behavior in 1 Samuel: 21, and Joab's instruction to the wise women in 2 Samuel:14 as examples.¹²⁴ The problem with these accounts is that they contain mere role-play, and not paradigmatic creative dramatics.

The insistence that the plays presented during worship are scripture-reflective coincides with the thinking of John Calvin, one of the most important figures in

¹²³This information was taken from a response written by Professor Haldeman to the researcher, as she inquired of him and his beliefs on the infusion of drama during worship. The response was written on December 22, 2009.

¹²⁴Savidge, 25.

Reformed Church theology. The notion that there should be a strong biblical influence upon worship is only the beginning of Calvin's thought. Not only must worship be reflective of the scriptures, but Calvin believed that nothing outside of the scriptures should be included in worship at all; for he felt the need to keep worship pure, and separate from the Western church traditions.¹²⁵ Because Calvin did not believe in complete liturgical freedom in worship, he produced liturgies for his worshipers, himself.¹²⁶ Therefore, it is a more accurate categorization of the researcher's belief in Bible-reflective dramatic presentations as similar to the Reformed Church's tradition—one which historically has placed an emphasis on worship according to the Word,¹²⁷ but due to its distrust of liturgies and later desire to increase congregational participation,¹²⁸ allowed for more liturgical freedom during worship. This liturgical freedom allowance sets the stage for a modified liturgy—one that infuses drama.

Paul Tillich's take on drama and worship can be derived through his interpretation of theology—that theology is God's manifestation to man, as revealed through religious symbols.¹²⁹ In his essay entitled, "Paul Tillich and Christian Education," John Housley explicates Tillich's theology of symbolism. According to Housley, Tillich sees the revelation of and the response to what he calls the symbols of Christology, the cross and

¹²⁵ Robert G. Rayburn, "Worship in the Reformed Church," *Presbyterian* 6, no. 1 (Spr 1980):19.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* 24.

¹²⁹ John B. Housley, "Paul Tillich and Christian Education," (*Religious Education* 62, no 4: Jl-Ag, 1967), 308.

the resurrection, as interdependent on each other.¹³⁰ People respond to what is revealed to them. It is here that Tillich places an emphasis on the educator's role in the impartation of biblical information, or the doctrine of religious knowledge. According to Housley, Tillich charges the educator with portraying concrete images of the manifestation of God through the utilization of the prominent symbols of God and Christ as they appear throughout the biblical narrative, (i.e., God, Christ, salvation, and sin), for example.¹³¹ Tillich's concern is that these symbols are neither left out nor watered down, for doing so does an injustice to the Bible itself. This doctrine of Christian education falls in line with the researcher's requirement for dramatic presentations that are Bible-centered. If what is revealed in each presentation adheres strictly to biblical content, then no watering down of the scriptures occurs, nor is any material left out.

In furtherance of the interconnection between revelation and response, Housley, discusses Tillich's religious classification of artistic style. Housley asserts Tillich's belief that only when these religious symbols are expressed in an artistic form, powerful and courageous enough to confront the human predicament as it presently exists, does it qualify to be termed religious.¹³² Dramatized scriptures possess this capability. Tillich has overall concerns about the artistic style, and content that is infused into Christian education curricula. Housley quotes Tillich as stating,

The most obvious implication for the concern of a religious education, with the growth in grace and knowledge is that careful consideration must be given to the kind of art that is to be used in curriculum material.... We tend to either render creativity aimless by sacrificing content. What must be done is to bring the content of

¹³⁰Ibid.

¹³¹Ibid., 308.

¹³²Ibid., 312.

the Christian faith to the learner's area of consciousness as a means of a penetrating existentialist style manifesting personal relationships of love and acceptance.¹³³

Again, this means that it is a profoundly important task of the educator, pastor, and/or drama ministry director, to present the scriptures boldly and truthfully; and that revealing them any other way renders the presentations as incapable of being classified as religious. Dramatic presentations which reflect scripture cannot falter when it comes to accuracy or the promotion of personal love and acceptance, and relationships with God. What makes this project so appropriate is that it aligns itself with Tillich's goal of communicating the Gospel and Christian education. Paul Tillich believes that communicating the Gospel is presenting it in ways that enable onlookers or listeners to decide for it or against it.¹³⁴

There have been several significant investigations about the relationship between theater and theology, more specifically, what theater has to say about God's role and the Christians' role in the life of faith. Karl Barth employed theatrical imagery to describe God's universe as *Theatrum Gloria Dei*, portraying the "created Cosmos as the theatre of the great acts of God in grace and salvation."¹³⁵ Todd E. Johnson, in his essay entitled "The Theology of the Theatrical Process," asserts that for Barth, "creation is the theater of God's covenant, especially evidenced in the theatricality of the role played by Jesus, God incarnate."¹³⁶ Johnson also argues that as a result of live theater's combined storytelling and performance qualities, it is the greatest depicter of God's incarnational

¹³³Ibid., 312.

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵Todd E. Johnson. "The Theology of the Theatrical Process," in *Performing the Sacred: Theology and Theater in Dialogue*, by Todd E. Johnson and Dale Savidge, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 54.

¹³⁶Ibid.

character; while its interaction is humanistic in nature, what is communicated is somewhat transcendent in nature.¹³⁷ He suggests that,

The actors tell the story by becoming the story. It is subject to all the vagaries and complexities of life. An actor might forget a part; the timing of the curtains, lighting, scene changes, could go awry. The story is told in the messiness of an imperfect world, and at its best, the live performance of the theatrical piece can bring everyone involved in the play—audience, performers, and stage crew—to a transcendent moment.¹³⁸

Johnson goes on to discuss how Hans Urs von Balthasar, a Swiss Catholic theologian, did a more detailed exploration of theology's and theater's relationship in his book entitled, *Theo-drama*. Johnson explains that *Theo-drama* is a five-volume composition in which drama is paradigmatically presented to explicate the Christian faith's theological duty.¹³⁹ In this work, drama is used as a parallel to reveal God's worldly incarnate actions. Christ's role in the saving event is made analogous to baptized humans' roles as they die to self and are reborn in Christ.¹⁴⁰

Balthazar's work inspired the efforts of two subsequent theologians -- Kevin Vanhoozer and Shannon Craig-Snell. Vanhoozer and Craig-Snell explored the interpretations of dramatic presentations with the interpretations of the scriptures.¹⁴¹ Their focus was on the hearing and doing of the word. Both argue that just as the intended purpose of the dramatic script is enactment, the scriptures are intended to be

¹³⁷Johnson, "The Theology of the Theatrical Process," 58.

¹³⁸Ibid., 58-59.

¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹Ibid., 54.

interpreted in life.¹⁴² Inspired by yet another investigative theologian, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Craig-Snell additionally delves into the relationship between script and performance by suggesting that it is through rehearsal of any text through which the actor gains meaning; thus one comes to know as a result of doing, as opposed to coming to do as a result of knowing.¹⁴³ This belief coincides with the researcher's belief that upon seeing/hearing/learning the word of God, youth will make different choices, for it is youth who will rehearse, study, interpret, and perform the scriptures, and therefore will more likely act accordingly, which is the ultimate goal of this project, netting the desired result of youth's commitment to and retention in the church.

Historical Foundation

Upon first mention of the word, theatre, one's first inclination is to think of entertainment. However, the art of theatre is quite a complex entity. In addition to the provision of entertainment, theatre purports in many of today's churches to teach life lessons and/or introduce themes. Providing for the entertainment of Christians and others is not a negative task of theatre, however; by no means is theater being negated here for its entertainment value. In fact, Dale Savidge, in his essay, "The Christian at Play," insists that indulging in recreation is an important part of being human, and the deprivation of pleasures of the spirit leads to the desire to fulfill the pleasures of the flesh.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³Ibid., 55.

¹⁴⁴Dale Savidge. "The Christian at Play," in *Performing the Sacred: Theology and Theater in Dialogue*, by Todd E. Johnson and Dale Savidge, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 118.

Drama's purpose as it pertains to the church has been long disputed by the fathers of the Church. In his essay entitled, "A Survey of Christianity and Theater in History," Dale Savidge historicizes England's mystery cycles, Germany's plays of Hrosvitha, and Spain's *auto sacramentales*, or one-act religious plays focused on celebrating the Eucharist, as indicators of the ways in which theatre was used, insisting that they were very popular in and around the fourteenth century.¹⁴⁵ It does not, however, yield a clear historical account of the origins of theater and Christianity. In fact, determining the origins of the vortex between theater and the Christian faith has proven difficult.

In one's attempt to identify the intersection between Christianity and the theatre, one could examine first the origin of Christian practices. Because of the expansive geographical region which comprised the Christian world at Christianity's inception, Christianity began as a religion consisting of varying ritual practices addressing the same fundamental ideas. In short, the origins of Christian praxis house many uncertainties. These variations occurred as they pertained to baptismal practices, the Eucharist, and the liturgical calendar. In his book, *Early Christian Worship*, Paul Bradshaw examines these rites and rituals from the perspective that while Christians operated under the commonalties of Christianity as a religion, their methods and rationale for their methods varied significantly according to their geographical locations. For example, Bradshaw presents baptism as practiced in Syria and Egypt, and Rome and North Africa. While the ideal purposes of baptism consisted of the common fundamental strand of initiation into Christianity, Christians in the eastern Diaspora carried out the baptismal practices

¹⁴⁵Dale Savidge. "A Survey of Christianity and Theatre in History," in *Performing the Sacred: Theology and Theater in Dialogue*, by Todd E. Johnson and Dale Savidge, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 19.

differently. According to Bradshaw, baptism's origin remains unresolved.¹⁴⁶ The recognition that in antiquity, there was no single way of performing either of the aforementioned rituals is important because even today Christianity and its liturgical practices continue to consist of a conglomeration of ritualistic methodological practices, based not on geographical location, but instead on denominational beliefs.

The origin of theatre history dates back to primitive Egyptian and Greek rituals and progresses into the works of Greek civilization.¹⁴⁷ The year of approximately 5 B.C.E. accounts for the first notable age of formal theatre in Greece, for this was a period when the worship of Greek gods (especially Dionysus) was prominent, and a period when theatre buildings were those buildings once dedicated to gods.¹⁴⁸ There were three main dramatists: Aeschylus, whose interest was justice, Sophocles, whose interest was in heroics, and Euripides, whose concern was that of evoking traditional attitudes.¹⁴⁹ David Brown, in his book, *God and Mystery in Words*, suggests that these Athenian dramatists utilized the stage for the purpose of religious tension exploration.¹⁵⁰

Some people believe that it is the shamanistic ritual that houses the origins of theatre. Dale Savidge gives evidence of the sources behind this belief. Savidge broached French theorist, Antonin Artaud's (1896-1948) "Theatre of Cruelty," in which Artaud asserted that with acting there was some sort of interplay between unconscious spiritual

¹⁴⁶Paul Bradshaw, *Early Christian Worship* (Collegeville, MD: Liturgical Press: 1996), 1-7.

¹⁴⁷Savidge. "A Survey of Christianity," 21.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹David Brown, *God and Mystery in Words: Experience through Metaphor and Drama* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 152.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., 153.

forces and sensory existence.¹⁵¹ This semblance of unconsciousness is similar to that found with shamanism, for shamans were known as psychic voyagers who journey to the world of the Gods.¹⁵² Savidge also speaks of David Cole's assertion in his book, *The Theatrical Event*, that the role of the actor resembles that of the shaman, for they both usher a way out of reality,¹⁵³ and Jerzey Grotowski's belief that an actor's ability to act in a state of trance is indicative that the actor takes a shamanistic journey, while performing magical acts along the way.¹⁵⁴

There is a transcendental element to acting; but for the researcher and this project, no evil forces are involved. The emphasis on scripture prevents the placement of such forces. Thus, the only force that comes into play is that of the Holy Spirit. Dale Savidge agrees. Savidge believes that acting presents a transcendent quality that provides for a mystical encounter beyond that which occurs in human interaction.¹⁵⁵ A descendant of this interaction occurs still today as theater is incorporated into worship, and it is this transcendent experience that initiates inward transformation.

Dale Savidge contends that in the Middle Ages there were two uses for religious drama—faith expression exploratory freedom of faith stories.¹⁵⁶ He found the employment of drama during the medieval period quite surprising because of the various oppositions to theatre that started with Christian opponents Eusebius (CE 260-340) and

¹⁵¹ Savidge, "A Survey of Christianity," 44.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

Gregory of Nyssa (CE 335- after 386) and continued through the tenth century. Despite their disdain for theatre, however, Eusebius and Gregory of Nyssa marveled at the enthusiasm shown in audiences' reactions and the unbelievable scenery;¹⁵⁷ and surprisingly, John Chrysostom (349-407), a third and perhaps the strongest opponent, hinted about having bishops perform some of his homilies.¹⁵⁸ Thus Savidge resolves that the use of drama in the coupled with the folktale performances gave rise to new and lively theatre in Western Europe in the tenth through the fifteenth centuries.¹⁵⁹

It has been argued that despite the fact that the art forms of Teutonic minstrels, mimesis, and rites and festivals, and other Christian ceremonies continued throughout the early period of the Middle Ages (CE 500-900),¹⁶⁰ theatre indeed had experienced a similitude of death after this period. It is believed that theatre was reborn during the High (latter) Medieval period. Savidge asserts that theatre's resurrection can be attributed to the medieval church's encouragement, for it was through the Church's evolution that it borrowed from cultural elements that existed during that period, and made way for more elaborate Christian rites. Hence, liturgical drama was borne.¹⁶¹ Churches incorporated choir chants and solos, and shifted from third-person narratives to first-person dialogues.¹⁶² However, because of the manner of incorporation of these tropes, their integration in worship was not considered as theatre for one main reason—there was no

¹⁵⁷ Brown, 158.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Savidge, "A Survey of Christianity," 38.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 35-36.

audience. Instead it was considered as liturgical drama because all the congregants participated.¹⁶³

It was not until the latter part of the Middle Ages that dramatic presentations began to show up in large force. As a result of their anthropological studies from 1912-1914, the Cambridge School of Anthropology (CSA) developed a theory, the CSA theory, which suggested that the evolution from ritual to drama occurred as a result of the diminution of ritual's magical element in the light of weakening belief, while concurrently the mimetic element progressed as heroic sagas replaced myths.¹⁶⁴ Aristotle's instinctual mimesis theory contradicts the CSA theory, however. Savidge describes Aristotle's theoretical assertion as "the natural instinct to imitate was what gave rise to liturgical drama, as Christians sought profound thoughts for dramatic depiction."¹⁶⁵

Religious drama had made its way into just about every country in Europe by the fourteenth century. The Latin liturgical drama performed by the priests in the sanctuary, with musical accompaniment quickly gave rise to dramatic expressions of Bible narratives. These dramatic interpretations were called mystery plays, and because of their nature of dramatic enactments of biblical tradition and doctrine, they served as both religious and communal ministries.¹⁶⁶ This project falls into this category of utilitarian purpose.

¹⁶³Ibid., 36.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., 23.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., 37.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 39.

Mystery plays, which were considered plays and not ritualistic elements of worship, were born after the doctrine of transubstantiation was solidified in 1215. Savidge suggests that as plays, they emphasized Christ's humanity and earthly ministry with life-like characters and because they were depicted in the vernacular of the country.¹⁶⁷ Their nomenclature also included cycle plays, as they were performed in cycles and embodied the cyclical pattern of fall, redemption, and judgment, and Corpus Christi plays, of York, England, as they were performed around the Feast of Corpus Christi, and depicted the saving acts of God from creation to final judgment.¹⁶⁸

Following the period of the Middle Ages, theatre extends to the Golden Age in the Renaissance with plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries.¹⁶⁹ As it progressed through the 1800s, theatre production borrowed from the Industrial Revolution, for in the United Kingdom, throughout Europe, North America, and the rest of the world, distinct changes occurred in agriculture, mining, manufacturing, and transportation that rendered themselves useful to the theatre.¹⁷⁰

Even though Savidge states that the notion of the biblical narratives as dramatic is one that has been a long-standing, yet disproven one, he also asserts that contemporary research suggests that the accounts compiled as historical throughout the scriptures indeed may have been acted out during Hebrew worship services, which consisted of either a lone storyteller, or a troupe of performers who mimicked the stories' characters

¹⁶⁷Ibid.

¹⁶⁸Todd E. Johnson, "Live Theatre in a Virtual World," in *Performing the Sacred: Theology and theatre in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 88.

¹⁶⁹Savidge, "A Survey of Christianity," 23.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., 23.

in an open performance as a part of the rituals.¹⁷¹ This theory of the dramatic makeup of the Bible aligns with the intent of this paradigm, and supports the researcher's belief in the importance of visual reflection of the scriptures.

The significance of visual reflection of the scriptures was shared by the translators of the New International Version, who believed the Song of Songs to be a drama. Their script of it in dialogue format with assigned parts led to the publication of *The Dramatized Old Testament*, which was later published in England as *The Dramatized Bible*, with a preface by editor, Michael Perry.¹⁷² Perry writes,

We like to think that further encouragement is given to the exercise of dramatizing the Bible for worship by one special discovery. It does appear that the Hebrew people in temple worship used drama to rehearse the acts of God in their history--notably the crossing of the Red Sea and their deliverance from the slavery of Egypt. Such dramatic presentations were not entertainment--though they would have been marvelously entertaining.¹⁷³

He continues,

And they were far more than visual aids--though Hebrew faith did require each generation to recall before the next, God's saving interventions, so that his mercy and his demands would not be forgotten. The Hebrew dramas had a teaching role, and they were acts of worship, too--precedents of our own "anamnesis," that is the calling of the mind of the saving work of Christ in the drama we term, according to our Christian tradition, the Lord's Supper, the Holy Communion/the Eucharist, the Mass.¹⁷⁴

The idea that the infusion of drama in worship has its roots in early Hebrew worship supports the belief that it has a place in contemporary worship, as well. The fact that the

¹⁷¹Ibid., 27.

¹⁷²Ibid., 28.

¹⁷³Ibid., 28-29.

¹⁷⁴Ibid.

infusion of drama in worship in antiquity purported to serve as a teaching mechanism, also aligns with the purpose of this paradigmatic project.

Historically, the church has been one of the main opponents of the theatre. It is often said that the church's disdain for theater stems from philosopher Plato's and other Greek philosophers' blatant opposition to it, although they were not Christians and Greek thought was prevalent at the time; for Plato saw the mimetic arts as deceptive deflectors of truth and reality, or in other words, liars.¹⁷⁵ Brown relies upon the setting of the religious festival in which the Greek performances of tragedy and comedy took place, as he insists that there was a strong connection between ancient Greek drama and religion.¹⁷⁶ Brown argues that the term, liturgy, or *leitourgia* (a supportive service donated by the wealthy for repairs, etc.) is deeply rooted in dramatic presentation dating back to Athens in the fifth- and fourth- centuries BC.¹⁷⁷

For the Christian playwright, the maintenance of tradition is almost an impossible task. In his essay entitled, "The Christian at Work: Being an Artist in the Theater," Todd E. Johnson addresses T. S. Eliot's forceful argument in his 1919 essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," that writers should include an historic perspective in all of their writings. While this is an ideal, Johnson doubts that it is even possible. Johnson attributes culture's and Christian ministry's rapid pace as the occupiers of artists' and writers' time, removing them from the leisure space necessary to allow for dramatic tradition.¹⁷⁸ While

¹⁷⁵ Savidge, "A Survey of Christianity," 31-32.

¹⁷⁶ Brown, 146.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁷⁸ Todd E. Johnson, "Live Theater in a Virtual World," in *Performing the Sacred: Theology and Theater in Dialogue*, by Todd E. Johnson and Dale Savidge, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 106.

on most fronts this may be true, in this particular project, the pace of the culture is not a factor. As, historically, various genres of entertainment have evolved according to the culture's evolution, few changes would be necessary in the utilization of this paradigm. This project is scripture-based. This means that as God's word is a living document, it is deemed current, and thus is applicable to current situations. All that the Christian playwright needs to do is adhere to the biblical narrative, as set forth in this paradigm; and each dramatic presentation will be as effective today as the biblical narrative has been throughout its existence. This in no way counters Tex Sample's assertions that youth are wired differently, as the content is not what is being altered. What is being altered is the presentation of the content in an attempt to gain youth's attention. Johnson speaks of Plato's demand that the art exudes a utilitarian function. In other words, art should contribute to humanity's education,¹⁷⁹ as it had done historically in the ancient Greek tradition. Infusing dramatic presentations that reflect the biblical scriptures into worship fulfills Plato's directive.

Savidge is convinced that the three categories of medieval drama: moral, mysterious, and liturgical, can easily be found in today's Christian worship community. Typically, in services in which historic liturgy is still used, the marginally-theatrical stylistic elements of the Latin music-drama are still dominant in either tropes, or chanted/sung oratorios.¹⁸⁰ Other churches that straddle the fence between traditional and contemporary worship present Bible-based plays with a mystery focus, with added

¹⁷⁹Ibid.

¹⁸⁰Savidge, "A Survey of Christianity," 40.

elements such as humor for humanization purposes.¹⁸¹ Still other churches present plays that focus on their moral worldviews, while simultaneously borrowing antics and topics from pop-culture in order to be more applicable.¹⁸² Savidge suggests that while theatre from the medieval period was variant; it serves as the precedent from which many of today's Christians derived ideas about the employment of theatre in worship.¹⁸³

The arrival of the twentieth century found several cultural and social conditions that warranted the attention of the Protestant church. With this onslaught of newly-arisen concerns, theatre and the arts assumed more religious goals. In fact, today, religious drama has evolved from the employment of live performances to reliance upon filmed performances.¹⁸⁴ The researcher believes that the use of filmed performances in worship can diminish the effectiveness of the visual dramatic presentation. Filmed presentations relied on additives for the film's sake, a factor which fails to qualify it as wholly scripture-based.

Today's youth are crying out for guidance. For such a time as this, when children are shooting their classmates in schools because they could not cope with the rejection of cliques with which they often wanted to be a part, such as in the case is of the Colorado massacre, the Virginia Tech shootings, and the shootings at Northern Illinois University, youth of today need guidance. Children need to be taught how to cope with disappointments, rejections, grief, failures, and successes. Many parents release their responsibility for raising their children when they reach the age of eighteen, for legally

¹⁸¹Ibid.

¹⁸²Ibid.

¹⁸³Ibid.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., 41.

they are deemed adults. This pronunciation of adult readiness implies readiness for assumption of all the responsibilities that accompany adulthood, to include bills, relationships, career choices, parenting, and controlling of social habits such as smoking, drinking and drug usage.

The researcher believes that a mere one-year adjustment in age does not guarantee preparedness for such responsibilities, for a level of intelligence is required as a prerequisite for successful, committed acceptance of such lifelong responsibilities. In his lecture surrounding the theme, "Training and Equipping Youth for Evangelism," Dr. Andrew Stoker echoes this sentiment. He discusses an aspect of his doctoral dissertation, entitled, "Adolescent Identity Formation." In his discussion, he refers to an assessment that he gave to youth between the ages of twelve and twenty-two years. Through this identity status assessment, Stoker found that twelve -and twenty-two year olds were on equal footing as it pertained to knowing who they were, from where they came, and where they were going.¹⁸⁵ Neither group knew who they were. As Stoker proceeded to discuss his recent interest in brain research, he asserted his findings. The area of the brain, the prefrontal cortex, which is the driving force of the mind that starts to put together all the surrounding stimuli, helping us to make sense of the world and the direction in which we are going, is not fully developed until the age of twenty-six in females, and the age of twenty-nine in males.¹⁸⁶ This means that scientifically, one is nowhere near that stage of maturation necessary to handle the responsibilities of adulthood as asserted by society's legal definition of adulthood. Youth are not capable of

¹⁸⁵ Andrew Stoker, "Training and Equipping Youth for Evangelism" (Lecture, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH January 29, 2009).

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

making proper judgments, because the section of their brain that is responsible for decision-making has not yet fully matured. The implication here is that youth will continue to make misguided and often non-beneficial judgments if they are left to go it alone up until the ages of twenty-six to twenty-nine. Proverbs 22:6 instructs that adults train children in the way they should go and when they are old, they will not depart from it.¹⁸⁷ The implication here is that as old persons they will adhere to their early teachings. What concerns the researcher, however, is the period between young and old, and the period of the late teens and early twenties, when youth are exploring adulthood, and are left to make the tough decisions on their own. Proverbs 22:6 seems to omit this period of growth. Herein lay the necessity for adult guidance in accordance with the Bible, in the lives of youth.

At Immanuel Bethel UCC, the need for the attraction and retention of youth for the purpose of carrying on the church has been established; and youth need guidance on how to do so. However, youth need guidance for other reasons, as well. Neurologically, youth are not prepared for all that awaits them as adults. Thus the question arises—"How does the church assist youth's development in ways that move them forward toward making sound judgments that are Christ- informed?" The researcher believes that the provision of guidance to youth by including them in the church worship services fulfills the instruction of Proverbs 22:6, and thus guarantees that they will return to the church and be able to carry on the work of the church, as Immanuel Bethel desires. It must be realized, however, that the nature of this inclusion is pivotal, as it pertains to youth's development and sustenance as members of the church.

¹⁸⁷Prv 22:6 (KJV).

Many of us grew up under the old adage that children ought to be seen and not heard. This teaching devalues what children have on their minds and forces them to keep their issues of concern bottled up inside, without ever addressing them. Children need to be included in the life of the church in ways that teach them that they are valued. Wayne Gordon, in his essay addressing the topic, "Training and Equipping Youth for Evangelism," asserts his concern that children are told every day that they are not important; and while they are told that they are the future, they are not treated as if they are the future.¹⁸⁸

John P. Newport insists that it is in worship that Christians find a deep sense of worth in the fact that God loves them and what Christ has done for them. Christians must know that they are accepted and loved just as they are.¹⁸⁹ Even when they are not valued by their parents, family members, or friends, they are valued immensely by God. This consoling truth is evident in the Gospel narratives, when Jesus refers to children as the standard for entrance into the kingdom of God. Jesus tells his disciples that only after they have become like children would they enter God's kingdom.¹⁹⁰ Jesus reverences children in this passage; and this is a fact of which children should be made aware. In worship, however, are youth intended recipients of this vital message? The researcher finds it problematic that if the children's presence in church is so disturbing in nature, that they are taught to be seen and not heard, by keeping quiet so the grown folks can hear the message, then the message relayed to youth is not that of Christ's love, but rather

¹⁸⁸Wayne Gordon, "Training and Equipping Youth for Evangelism," (Lecture, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH, January 28, 2009).

¹⁸⁹John P. Newport, "The Arts in Worship," *Review & Expositor* 80, no. 1 (Winter, 1983): 72.

¹⁹⁰Mt 18:3-4 (NRSV).

that worship is designed for adults. How is the church relaying the message of Christ's love to youth? Gordon advocates for a mindset of change by Christians in worship—that children are important.¹⁹¹

Immanuel Bethel United Church of Christ is a 122-year-old church with a vast makeup of nomenclatures and denominations. The majority of its members have an extensive history with the church, many of whom have relatives who were charter members. Its history is rich, for since its origination in 1887, it has gone through transformations resulting in at least three nomenclatures. Its initial formation occurred in efforts to fill the needs of Germans excluded from membership in the Lutheran Church because of their fraternal-organization affiliations.¹⁹² Within nine months after its first Congregational meeting, it was incorporated as the German-speaking, Evangelical Immanuel Church of Dolton.¹⁹³ Three years later, it confirmed its first class of young people with a confirmation ceremony.¹⁹⁴

In 1934, a merger occurred between the Evangelical Churches of North America and the Reformed Church of America, which subsequently gave birth to the Evangelical and Reformed denomination. Immanuel Bethel's membership grew rapidly with members from non-German heritage; and within ten years, upon adoption of their new constitution,

¹⁹¹ Wayne Gordon, "Training and Equipping Youth for Evangelism" (Lecture, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH, January 28, 2009).

¹⁹² Henrietta Bassler, interview by author, Chicago, Illinois, March 2, 2009.

¹⁹³ The book, *Immanuel-Bethel United Church of Christ Presents the Tree of Life and History*, is an Immanuel Bethel United Church of Christ's self-published work that celebrates the church's centennial. There is no listed publisher and while the centennial year was 1987, it is not certain whether it was written and compiled during that year. It attempts to give a chronological account of the church's history. The information was taken from page 32 of the book.

¹⁹⁴ *Immanuel-Bethel United Church of Christ Presents the Tree of Life and History*, 32.

they discontinued the German focus.¹⁹⁵ In 1957, another merger occurred between the Evangelical and Reformed Church of America and the Congregational-Christian Church, which led to the formation of the United Church of Christ, and the adoption of the church's new name—Immanuel United Church of Christ.¹⁹⁶ The United Church of Christ denomination continued to grow and so did the membership of Immanuel. They held two services every Sunday and their church school was overcrowded. The church celebrated its 75th year anniversary with plans for relocation. In 1964, Immanuel held its first worship service in their new building. They celebrated by having church and community dignitaries enter singing songs of praise.¹⁹⁷

In December of 1970, Immanuel merged with the nearby Bethel Church, whose young population rapidly dispersed because of increased integration, and thus their desire for better living conditions. They became Immanuel-Bethel United Church of Christ.¹⁹⁸ Immanuel Bethel subsequently inherited members from Peace United Church of Christ, in Harvey, Illinois, as they lost members when their congregation moved from their community in 1973. In the 1970s, Immanuel Bethel United Church of Christ had a total membership as high as 864.¹⁹⁹

The captivation of youth to the point of membership sustenance has been a long-standing problem at Immanuel Bethel. They grapple with their inability to maintain youth in their congregation, and expressed their concern for the church's demise because of the

¹⁹⁵Ibid.

¹⁹⁶*Immanuel-Bethel United Church of Christ Presents the Tree of Life and History*, 32.

¹⁹⁷Ibid., 33.

¹⁹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹⁹Ibid., 34.

inevitable mortality of its majority senior members. While they boast of their ability to endure change and their successful history of having done so repeatedly, Immanuel Bethel clings tightly to its ascertained character and personality, and insists that its identity is respected and preserved. Many there define character as its family-oriented nature, while others see it as consisting of elements of worship praxis that need not be altered.²⁰⁰ It is their wish that,

Nothing should be done which would make a fundamental change in the character of the congregation. Immanuel Bethel, at this late date, does not want to take on a new personality. We want to be the same church that we have been and that has always been important to the people for over 100 years.²⁰¹

It is here that the researcher sees the paradox—undergoing change, while staying the same. The character to which the church's Vision Statement is referring is that of its Reformed and Evangelical roots, to which the congregants are exposed through its worship service. On any given Sunday at Immanuel Bethel, one can experience a worship service that contains liturgy, organ-accompanied hymnody, and/or other choral recitations. It is this character and identity to which Immanuel Bethel wants to remain true. However, as new members continued to pass through, by joining, worshiping, not-relating, and leaving, modifications are imperative. The church's adherence to the liturgical worship style employed at its inception in its quest to stay the same, may be the single-most dominant contributing factor to its decline in membership of its youth; and that if Immanuel Bethel expects to continue to change as change dictates, then it must modify its worship style in order to address the needs of the people in its surrounding

²⁰⁰Table 27 contains a list of all of the responses of congregants who responded in the survey.

²⁰¹Taken from the "The Need for Continuity" section of the *Vision Statement* of the church that I received from Mrs. Candi Yehnert.

communities whom it wishes to attract—mainly youth. Herein is the problem. Is there a way for Immanuel Bethel United Church of Christ to provide for the needs of the predominantly African-American community, and the needs of youth, while concurrently maintaining its character and identity as a church of Evangelical and Reformed origins?

The infusion of drama into the worship service is a viable Christian education tool that embraces and transforms youth and the congregation in ways that do not deviate from the basic structure of the worship style of Immanuel Bethel, for its dominant methodology is centered on the biblical narratives. The employment of drama, performed by youth, depicting the biblical scriptures also serves as an instrument merging cultures and generations within the church. However, this addition of drama fits neither with the liturgical worship tradition of Immanuel Bethel nor the aspects of the worship style of its Reformed Church Affiliates.

Immanuel Bethel began as an Evangelical Church. Evangelicalism is a Protestant Christian movement which began during the 1730s.²⁰² The origin of Evangelicalism can be traced back to the movement of the Methodist Church's founder, John Wesley.²⁰³ There was a great variance in history development of the Reformed Church depending upon the century and the country. It was influenced by both its theological beginnings and its political involvement (regional church establishment in Germany and religious freedom in the United States).²⁰⁴

²⁰²Stewart J. Brown, review of *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: the Age of Wilberforce, More, and Finney*, by John Wolfe, *Studies in World Christianity* 13, no 3 (2007): 296, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rsh&AN=ATLA0001632586&site=ehost-live> (accessed January 4, 2010).

²⁰³History: The Evangelical Church, <http://www.easternconference.org/drupal/node/17>, (accessed September 29, 2009).

²⁰⁴World Alliance of Reformed Churches, “Reformiert Online: A Short History of the Reformed Churches,” <http://www.reformiert-online.net/t/eng/rwb/info2.jsp>, (accessed September 29, 2009).

The merger between the Congregational Christian churches and the Evangelical and Reformed churches in 1957, to become the United Church of Christ, brought on different structures of worship by way of autonomy. Whereas before the Reformed Church's structure was greatly liturgical but influenced by the Evangelicals' enthusiasm for liberty and spontaneity in worship,²⁰⁵ the United Church of Christ sought to provide worship that proceeded with three stages —giving thanks, confession and self reflection, and a posture of assurance of forgiveness.²⁰⁶

As the newly-formed denomination sought to define itself, its commissioners placed as top priority the task of providing a worship service that embraced the differing needs of those used to highly liturgical worship style and those who were open to the allowance of greater freedom for their ministers, as it pertained to the order of worship, while simultaneously remaining cognizant of their current ecumenical renewal of worship.²⁰⁷ It is clear that the then-current style of worship was insufficient in addressing the needs of the diverse merging cultures. Now, some forty-two years later, as Immanuel Bethel seeks to fulfill its mission to "...offer to God and share with God's children our time and talents, our building and financial resources, and our compassion and caring,"²⁰⁸ it must evaluate whether or not its current worship style is sufficient enough to embrace youth in the surrounding African-American community.

²⁰⁵Horton Davies, "Reshaping the Worship of the United Church of Christ," *Worship* 41, no 9 (1967): 542.

²⁰⁶Ibid., 545.

²⁰⁷Ibid., 544.

²⁰⁸Immanuel Bethel United Church of Christ Mission Statement. This document has no indication of date of development or revision.

There are ways in which Immanuel Bethel can remain true to its identity. In examination of the quadrilateral structure of the Evangelical Church, the trait of activism is one that certainly can remain the same. Immanuel Bethel exemplifies this trait [exemplification of the gospel by teaching, giving, and making disciples] to a measure beyond compare. They have an extensive Vacation Bible School week, for which they plan months in advance. They donate myriads of prizes, treats, costumes, and props, in order that they may provide children with a hands-on, interactive, drama-enhanced, fun-filled, educational experience. Over forty students were in attendance at both, the 2009 Vacation Bible School sessions. The high attendance rate at this event speaks volumes of the enhancements that are necessary for attracting youth. The interaction with games and dramatic skits was the children's confessed favorite.²⁰⁹ Immanuel Bethel invited the students and their parents to the following Sunday's worship service in order that they might present two of their skits before the congregation. Approximately ten of the forty showed up.

If Immanuel Bethel is going to succeed in embracing the community, then they would be embracing the African-American community, because that is the community that surrounds them. Therefore, not only do they have the task of finding ways to attract youth, they have the more difficult task of attracting youth who come from a culture unlike their own. In her article, "Taste and See the God of Your Ancestors: Drama in the African-American Church," Candi Dugas-Crawford describes African Americans as a people of expression, motion, intensity, and action and insists that these characteristics

²⁰⁹The researcher bases this statement upon informal conversations with various children who attended the week's session, August 10-14, 2009.

were evidenced in their worship services.²¹⁰ Clearly a worship service that is saturated with praise choruses and hymns that are played straight from the hymnal does not include the aforementioned attributes, and therefore do not address the characteristics expected by African-Americans. Dugas-Crawford asserts that the overall quintessence of the worship service is the sensuous encounter with God, and that a worshiper's transformation occurs through this encounter.²¹¹ With transformation as its goal, this project must adhere to Dugas-Crawford's elemental guidelines.

More factors are necessary in order to captivate students' attention in ways that will make them want to know more about God enough to lead them toward retention in the church. The mere inclusion of games and craft-making will not suffice. The playing of games is likened to the new toy a child receives at Christmas. The novelty of the toy captures the child's attention for a short time; then the toy is cast aside. Children must experience something of value in order to value the something that they are experiencing. The key is to give youth something to which they can relate and hold, and that they are confident will guide them toward positive living. This is no easy task. In fact, in her book, *Soul Stories: African American Christian education*, Anne Streaty Wimberly examines the difficulty youth have with discerning life's sensibility, and asserts the needs of youth as those of affirmation, encouragement, and support in their quest for positive life, meaning, and purpose.²¹² She categorizes this yearning and adults' yearning for

²¹⁰Candi Dugas-Crawford, "Taste and See the God of Your Ancestors: Drama in the African-American Church," *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 27, no 1-2 (Fall/Spring 1999-2000): 183.

²¹¹Ibid., 186.

²¹²Anne Streaty Wimberly, *Soul Stories: African-American Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 30.

guidance that would bring about new life direction and change²¹³ [transformation], as their quests for liberation and vocation.²¹⁴ Persons who are liberated envision themselves surging through knowledge feelings, thoughts, and beliefs that have prevented them from acting and recognize the difference between the past life that did not work for them and the new possibilities of life in the realm of God.²¹⁵ She calls the latter liberation through religious transformation,²¹⁶ the ends to which Acting to Act aims to guide all participants. Vocation is the God-given directive to do for others.²¹⁷

There is no better resource than the Bible for accomplishing this complex task of leading others toward both liberation and vocation. Wimberly asserts the provision of a culturally sensitive process as one of the challenges of responding to their yearnings, for a culturally sensitive process allows for openness and sharing one's experiences, hopes, fears, and concerns.²¹⁸ This is difficult in churches that keep youth away from their own worship services. For Wimberly, the task of leading congregants to liberation and vocation can be accomplished through the telling of stories about persons' life experiences while in Acting to Act, the researcher attempts this task through the inclusion of youth in regular worship and the infusion of dramatized biblical narratives. From its employment of the word of God as its educational basis, and study sessions during which

²¹³Wimberly, 19.

²¹⁴Ibid., 20.

²¹⁵Ibid., 25.

²¹⁶Ibid.

²¹⁷Ibid., 26.

²¹⁸Ibid., 32.

they reflect for relevance, youth derive significance. Thus, the project gives youth voice; it gives them value.

Children must believe that they are valued if they are expected to stay in the church. When children are placed in worship services that do not honor them, that do not allow them to participate, and that do not address their concerns, they are not being valued. Allowing children to act out the scriptures provides them with an opportunity to learn of God's love for them, God's will for their lives, and thus, God's valuation of their being. Iris V. Cully addresses the need for children's desires to be respected because of who they are. She states in her essay, "The Theology of Children," that "God cares for children through adults who have both the will and the power to take constructive action."²¹⁹ Adults must be willing to teach the children. By allowing children to act out the scriptures, adult congregants are taking action in leading children toward transformation.

What youth are being taught is equally as important. Many people would argue that youth do not want to hear the ancient stories of the Bible, and that today's contemporary age has further alienated youth. However, the researcher holds fast to the power of the biblical narratives for educating and guiding youth, and believes that youth are more than capable of comprehending biblical content to the points of relevance and application to their own lives. Frances E. Bailey, former religious professor at Hobart and William Smith College, conducted a study on the response of youth to the Bible. He explored the problem of youth's ability to see relevance between the Bible and their concerns. Bailey concludes that adolescents indeed possess the capability of determining

²¹⁹Iris V. Cully, "A Theology of Children," *Review and Expositor* 80, no 2 (Spr. 1983): 204.

relevance, but also stresses the imperative of careful instruction of the process and adequate time allotted to Bible study.²²⁰

Some may view the infusion of drama into worship as bringing the *secular* into worship. However, drama infusion is not a new concept. In fact, Dugas-Crawford insists that as long as the *secular* is being brought into worship with sacred ends, it is acceptable indeed.²²¹ She supports this notion of prior existence through her reference to Isaac Watts' re-writing of music in ways that contrasted those that had been dictated to African-Americans by England.²²² Dugas-Crawford also identifies theater as the most powerfully explosive addition to the worship experience a church could ever add to its *calendar*.²²³ She insists that the essence of worship is the sensuous encounter with God where the worshiper would meet, hear, feel, see, and taste God, and it is through this *encounter* that the worshiper's transformation occurs.²²⁴ She insists that more people would be in church today if the church was not so rigid and inflexible,²²⁵ blocking out one of the aforementioned sensual encounters.

Even as she supports the utilization of dramatic worship, it appears that Dugas-Crawford's idea is that of occasional dramatic infusion. Her reference to adding *drama* to the *calendar* indicates that it is not a commonplace event; whereas the researcher advocates the infusion of drama in every worship service as it correlates with the *text*

²²⁰Frances E. A. Bailey, "The Response of Adolescents to Selected Bible Passages: The Ability of Youth to Relate the Bible to Its Concerns" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1955), 249.

²²¹Bailey, 249.

²²²Ibid.

²²³Ibid.

²²⁴Cully, 186.

²²⁵Dugas-Crawford, 191.

from which the sermon will be preached. Drama brings the scriptures to the forefront as a visual. Dugas-Crawford supports this notion, as she asserts that, "theater is a metaphor to life. It is lifelike."²²⁶ Through its presentation alone, drama has the potential of reaching the unsaved, and the illiterate in ways that are non-offensive, for onlookers can look, see, and feel, while continuing to take refuge in the secret hiding place of their thoughts. A worship that infuses drama allows the worshipers to slip totally out of reality for a brief time, and experience God on his or her own level.²²⁷

Another way in which Immanuel Bethel can retain its character and identity is through its Reformed Church's trait of staying true to the Word of God, or through its Biblical-adherence. When drama is infused in worship, it should not be done so based on themes, or notions, or ideas. Rather, plays that are infused into the worship service should be restricted to those comprised of predominantly biblical content. One might argue that worshipers receive an overwhelming amount of experience with the biblical narratives during worship through its liturgies, hymns, and scripture readings. However, it is the visual modality of dramatic presentation that helps worshipers to get a clearer sense of what was going on in the scriptures. If Immanuel seeks to transform youth, there is no better way in which to do it, than to provide them with the word of God. While Immanuel Bethel has undergone many changes over the years, it still stands. Immanuel Bethel's sustenance proves that it is open to change and can and will adjust. It is also indicative of its commitment to being God's church, and its recognition that change is indeed inevitable.

²²⁶Ibid.

²²⁷Dugas-Crawford, 195.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

The project, *Acting to Act: A Youth-center, Drama-Infused Paradigm of Christian Education that Reflects Scripture and Ignites Emancipatory Learning* employs the mixed-methods to approach data collection and analysis. The quantitative method is used to illustrate the number of congregants taking the surveys, and the qualitative method reflects their attitudes regarding the reliance, appropriateness, and effectiveness of the project's overall implementation and components. The data analyzed will be reported in terms of the four intended purposes of the project—to attract, educate, transform, and retain, youth for the insurance of membership longevity without disruptive alterations to the regular worship service. The researcher then employed the sequential exploratory strategy for her mixed methods of data collection. Usually in this strategy, there is a secondary quantitative data follow-up to an initial qualitative data collection¹ used to assist with the interpretation of the qualitative findings. Thus, the qualitative data will illustrate initial and consequential attitudes of youth and adults regarding the various aspects of the project's design and purposes; and the quantitative data will reflect numerically the qualitative findings.

The project was implemented using the techniques of pre-and post-surveys, journaling, rehearsal/ application, and group discussions (critique/analysis sessions). The

¹John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2009), 211.

pre-and post-surveys were designed to determine parishioners' attitudes toward drama as an integral part of regular worship at Immanuel Bethel. Some of the basic questions included whether congregants believe that drama has a place at the church and whether the inclusion of drama compromises the character of the worship service in any way. It is imperative to establish that this project is one that will be un-offensive and useful to the church as it purports to be. The technique of study sessions was necessary for the sake of determining necessary rehearsal time frames and for the education of the youth pertaining to the word of God. The researcher argues that the education of the youth about the Bible is the foundational backdrop of their faith formation and ultimate transformation toward church leadership with established thirsts for a relationship with God. Due to the researcher's belief that knowledge of the Bible and the expectations it asserts directly affect the decisions made by youth, the study component was added; she believes that to study a pericope in depth for meaning and relevance is essential before attempting to dramatize it for the clarification of meaning before others.

A third technique employed in this project was that of journaling. Contextual associates were given a set of journal prompts from which to choose as a lead in to their desired written entries. Journaling was used because it allowed for the unhindered reflection of all participants regarding the project. While prompts were provided they served only as a guide, and were not finite in topic options for the journalists.

Finally, the technique of group discussions was used, as well. The researcher facilitated group critique/analysis sessions during which she asked questions of the contextual associates in order to lead them toward articulation of their attitudes and beliefs about the project, its effectiveness, and its personal impact. The contextual

associates also critiqued and evaluated each lesson and provided feedback on each presentation—feedback on its dramatic elements of costuming, projection, set design, length, and script. This was done so as to improve the project's context for overall effectiveness.

Essentially, the project was broken up into three components: a Youth Rehearsal/Study period, which lasted for one-and-a-half hours, and included a reflective examination of the week's scripture, delving for meaning relevance, a Play Dramatization/Presentation, component, which was the actual dramatization of the scripture before the preached word and lasted approximately eight to ten minutes each week in performance time and twenty to twenty-five minutes listening to the sermons, and a Critique/ Analysis component, which was about one to one-and-a-half hours in length each week, and involved journaling and group discussion.

The problem that emerged from Elaine's ministry and her context at Immanuel Bethel UCC was, "In the vein of providing Christian education, what can Elaine do, as Youth Pastor to assist Immanuel Bethel a predominantly Euro-American church, comprised mostly of individuals sixty and older, to attract, educate, transform, and retain youth from the African-American community in which it sits, in order that they may carry on the legacy of Immanuel Bethel United Church of Christ?" If youth are provided with Christian education that reflects scripture in ways that are appealing, relevant to their life situations, and render the youth valuable, then not only would they be attracted to the church and the Christian faith, but they would sense their worth, take ownership of their places as members of the church, and therefore, and would remain in the church, with the desire to learn more about and be in right relationship with God.

The validity of the project is supported in a few ways. One element that supports its validity is the overall time that the researcher has been immersed in the project. While the actual implementation time frame for the project was a period of six weeks in September and October, the researcher has employed drama as a Christian Education medium since September of 2007. Initially, drama was included in the Youth worship services every Sunday, and on the fifth Sundays, which amounted to four times a year. Three of the youth who have been baptized have been attending since the beginning. The other two were in attendance for at least six months prior to joining. The durations of their attendance give credence to the retentive phenomena that come into play as a result of the educational and applicable dimensions of this project.

Other evidence of validity of the project was the frequent debriefings done with a colleague of the researcher, who also teaches elementary school in the Chicago Public Schools system and Sunday school at a church whose membership also lacks significant youth attendance, involvement, and participation. The researcher has consulted this colleague regarding ideas for implementation and processes for dealing with the youth. She has explained the various components of the project and received feedback from her. As an educator with the Chicago Public Schools, this colleague also senses the need for continued guidance in the lives of youth, for she is instrumental in the design of extracurricular programs that attract youth.

A third source of validity support is that of the researcher's observances of select contextual associates and youth after the program's implementation. Two contextual associates volunteered to assume responsibility for the youth Christmas Program, as it was established that the researcher would not be available to do. They chose the theme of

the presentation, wrote a play, and attempted to present it. The length and complexity of the play caused it to need numerous edits. Thus, so much time usually set aside for rehearsal was devoted to editing, and there was not enough rehearsal time to produce a quality presentation. Nonetheless, the associates' passion to plan a Christmas play to be used as a Christian education tool for both the youth and the congregation speaks volumes of their buy-in to the concept of the significance of drama during worship as an educational instrument.

The researcher's role was pivotal, as it was she who collaborated weekly with the Pastor regarding scripture selection, rewrote the assigned scriptures as play scripts, developed a curriculum of study for corresponding passages, developed journal prompts for weekly journal entries, and led the weekly discussions.

Some biases the researcher brings to the project include her playwriting experiences, as they date back to 1987 when she was a teacher in South Carolina. She is also biased by her rebellious experiences as an adolescent, and her belief in the concept of knowing better to do better. She is biased by her passion to educate, and sees education as the key to all success, including spiritual formations.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

Implementation of this project began on May 16, 2010, when Elaine met with the Pastor of Immanuel Bethel, Pastor Ray, to give him the specifics of the project. It was at this meeting that Pastor Ray suggested that Elaine present her project before the Church Council at the next Council Meeting. It was determined that the next council meeting was to be held on June 29, 2010. However, before the meeting, Elaine gave verbal invitations to various congregants, inviting them to participate as contextual Associates for her project, and told them that an official invitation and commitment letter in writing was forthcoming in the fall. She told fifteen members in all. Elaine chose the youth because they were part of her youth ministry. They were reliable and were already familiar with dramatizing the scriptures. Elaine chose these adults because of her prior working relationships with them. They were open-minded and committed to the work of the church.

Elaine prepared a PowerPoint presentation¹ bearing the same nomenclature as her project and presented it before the Church Council on June 29, 2010. During this presentation, she first discussed the context (Immanuel Bethel) and its concerns as she had determined them from her earlier research and interviews. She asked the council members if they agreed with her findings that the longevity of the church and the need for

¹See Appendix A.

youth to carry it through to the next generation were indeed the main areas of concern.

The Council agreed.

The second topic discussed during the presentation was that of Elaine's spiritual autobiography. Elaine gave a brief description of her life, including life lessons, successes, and failures. Elaine then explicated that the synergism between her context and herself, highlighting her educational background and interests, and suggested that with the aid of her project, Immanuel Bethel and she could achieve the goal of attracting and retaining youth for the purpose of longevity assurance. After discussing how well she and her context fit together, Elaine gave the specifics of her project to include its componential constructs of 1) transposition of the biblical narratives into plays; 2) study and rehearsal of the plays; 3) dramatization of the plays; and 4) critique/analysis of the process. Elaine explained that the first component, the transposition of the scriptural narratives into plays would be based upon the scripture given to her by Pastor Ray earlier in the week. She also explained that the second component, that of study and rehearsal, would take place on Sunday mornings one-and-a-half hours before the beginning of worship; during worship, the youth would present the scripture of the day, which is the third component. Finally, Elaine explained that the fourth component—critique and analysis would be done by the youth and the contextual Associates in a one hour meeting after each worship service.

Elaine presented a tentative schedule of the project's implementation, detailing that Acting to Act would be implemented over a six week period, and that pre and post surveys would be given to the congregation. She explained that she had previously invited certain members of the congregation to serve as contextual associates, and that in

August they would be receiving commitment letters. She opened the presentation up to the Council for questions. There were none.

On August 29, 2010, Elaine distributed commitment letters². Elaine gave letters to nineteen potential associates. Some of the letters were signed and returned on the same day; some of them were returned the following week; and the rest of them took as long as three weeks to be returned. By the beginning of the project's implementation, all had been returned. Two of the previously invited associates were unable to participate; one went away to college and the other relocated to live with her daughter. After worship on September 12, 2010, Elaine issued the first attitudinal survey to the congregation (See Appendix B). Her Pastor was very supportive in this endeavor, for he encouraged the congregation to participate. The congregation was very receptive and cooperative; they completed the surveys and return them to her immediately. In all, Elaine collected twenty seven surveys.

On Wednesday, September 15, via text message, the Pastor sent Elaine the focal scripture for Sunday's worship—Luke 16:1-14. Elaine wrote the biblical narrative as a play to be rehearsed on Sunday morning³. She created a list of talking points for the purpose of study during the rehearsal⁴ in preparation for the lesson. She did this in order to highlight the important points from the scripture (each session will contain a set) during the weekly Rehearsal/Study sessions after each performance. In order to give the contextual associates some ideas for their journal entries, Elaine drafted some Journal

²See Appendix B.

³See Appendix C.

⁴See Appendix D.

Questions.⁵ From which the context associates could choose. From the journal entries, Elaine hoped to gain insight on the attitudes of the various participants regarding the infusion of drama in worship. She purchased journals for the contextual associates to use for reflection, and drafted the journal questions/ideas for the context associates to ponder, as well. Because the sessions would run through lunch time, Elaine prepared a meal of Lasagna, salad, and fruit cups to be eaten during the Critique/Analysis session, creating an atmosphere of family in the process.

Session one was held on September 19, 2010. It began with the Rehearsal/Study session. When the session began, six students were in attendance. Two of the students came late, joining in at approximately 10:15 A.M. It appeared that the Pastor had forgotten the about the rehearsal/study sessions; for he had scheduled new member classes from nine o'clock to ten o'clock each Sunday morning to prepare new members for baptism. Two of our youth were a part of this process. Therefore, they missed most of the rehearsal. Elaine gave them one-line parts to make learning easier.

Elaine began with the first item on the weekly Rehearsal/Study Session Agenda—opening prayer.⁶ The students named their prayer concerns. Elaine proceeded with the introduction of the week's scriptures, Luke 16: 1-13 (The Parable of the Dishonest Manager). This study component of the project's design addresses the educational purpose asserted by the researcher. The first step was to do a read-through directly from the Bible. When they finished, Elaine asked the students to summarize what had occurred. The students could not. They were confused with what it was that the manager had done. So Elaine had them to do a second read- through, but this time with dramatics.

⁵See Appendix F.

⁶See Appendix B.

Elaine had the students do the reading a second time with dramatic emphasis in order that they may get a better sense of the events. She also wanted them to see the difference between the two types of readings. This time when Elaine asked them what happened, three of the students could articulate more of the actual events in their own interpretations. Elaine moderated the conversations. Elaine then discussed the items on her list of the week's Talking Points.⁷ She explained the word parable to the students. She asked the students to discuss possible feelings about dishonesty. She had this as one of her parts of emphasis because it led the students to put themselves in the character's place and then make an interpretive deduction, while engaging their own feelings, thus rendering the relevancy dimension the researcher believes is necessary for the students to find value what they are doing. Elaine asked the students to then identify the dishonest behaviors and who did them. The students were asked to summarize the lesson.

In another effort to encourage scripture application, Elaine had the students recall situations of which they knew of persons who lost their jobs because of dishonesty. She asked them to tell how the situation relates to them today. One student talked about the importance of honesty. She asked the students to name situations in which they could possibly find themselves that may tempt them, toward dishonesty, and to tell how they would handle each situation. One student spoke of working at a cash register; another mentioned working as a banker. Elaine asked them how they would handle the temptation to be dishonest in those situations, especially if encouraged by a friend. The students stated that they would not do it. The students did a recap of the lesson and the study portion of this lesson ended at approximately 9:40 A.M.

⁷See Appendix D.

The students took a five minute break. As the rehearsal phase of this session began, the students stated that they were hungry. Elaine apologized, for she did not have anything to give them for breakfast. The students rehearsed their parts. Elaine gave them about fifteen minutes to study and memorize their parts. However, the narrators' parts were extensive. Elaine told the students not to worry about memorizing their lines because she could feed the lines to them. They closed the session at 10:40 A.M. with prayer. They selected their costumes, which included wigs for all the male characters. The students got dressed and went into the Sanctuary to present the scriptures.

The students remembered their blocking. Elaine kept her script on-hand for those who had forgotten lines. The narrator forgot her lines. She said a few lines then forgot, said a few, and then forgot. Elaine fed her the missed lines, but it seemed, the more she fed, the more she forgot. The presentation was over the students returned to the dressing area. The student who narrated the play was very upset that she had forgotten her lines. Elaine was upset, too, for this was the first day and it appeared that her proposed project was a failure.

After the performance, Elaine and the youth remained in worship to hear the sermon about the scripture they had just studied, rehearsed, and portrayed. Addressing the educational purpose of the project, this gave the youth an opportunity to hear a sermon about a scripture with which they were very familiar, and see if the preached word was any clearer to them, to see if their comprehension was any clearer. She sat with them for a few minutes and one of the students heard Pastor call his name. He whispered to Elaine that Pastor was going to "make them pay attention if he kept calling their

names.” Pastor retold the story in his sermon entitled “Good Stewardship.” The students were attentive.

Elaine went to put the food in the oven. When she returned, she heard the Pastor discussing the shrewdness of the manager. After the sermon ended, Elaine led the students to the meeting room where the Critique/Analysis Session was to take place. She gave the students their journals and journal questions. She did this because she believed that they would need extra time to put their thoughts on paper. She was correct.

One male student rebelled a little, stating that he did not do that much work at school. One young girl, who was only six could not spell her words, and kept asking her big sisters for help. After a short while they grew tired and stopped helping her. She kept trying however. When the worship service ended, the youth were joined by the adults. There were six adults in attendance at this session; two of them had told Elaine previously that they had meetings. One of them was out due to a broken foot.

The session opened with prayer. After the prayer Elaine welcomed everyone. She handed out the agenda for Weekly Critique/Analysis Sessions⁸ and the Revised Meeting Schedule,⁹ in accordance with the Session Agenda.¹⁰ Elaine had already placed the journal on the table for the adults, so they went right to work. By now the students were eating their lunch and stating how much they enjoyed it. The adults ate as well. The time came for the Critical Analysis questions.¹¹ This part was designed for the adults to give verbal feedback on the occurrences during the presentation, in order that the paradigm

⁸See Appendix B.

⁹See Appendix B.

¹⁰See Appendix B.

¹¹See Appendix E.

might be optimally developed and implemented. Elaine asked the contextual associates to tell their concerns about the presentation. The first issue that came up was the dropped lines. They felt that they were distracting. When Elaine asked for options, some of the responses were to give shorter parts, break up the parts, allow more rehearsal time and to allow persons with extensive lines to use the script. One associate recommended that the children were allowed to use the script. Elaine asked them if that would be okay, for she wanted to maintain a higher level of performance. They insisted that it would be okay to do so.

Another issue that was addressed was that of the tardiness of the two students in the New Members class. (One student expressed disappointment in the length of his parts; he wanted more to say). Pastor apologized for the conflict and agreed to let the students out earlier.

The contextual associates were asked to name some of the positive aspects of the presentation. Some of their responses were that it was nice to see the kids interact with the scriptures; another commented that dramatization implants the scriptures on viewers' minds; others stated that it is good for the adults, as well, as a reminder of the scriptures, and yet another remarked that the costumes were good. The last response was that dramatizing the scriptures gives a clearer understanding of the scriptures.

Afterwards, Pastor and Elaine discussed the time conflict the two students had between the Rehearsal/Study session and the new members' class. Pastor agreed to give the scripture to Elaine earlier in the week so that she could give it to the students earlier, as opposed to Sunday morning, in order that they would have more rehearsal time. While Pastor gave Elaine the next scripture earlier, Elaine did not get to write the play any

earlier because of scheduling constraints. The lesson here is to make sure there are no conflicts with the rehearsals. Adequate rehearsal time must be set aside if this project is going to be successful.

The next lesson learned was that of feeding the youth. While Elaine had prepared lunch for them, she had not considered breakfast. The students expressed their hunger during the morning session, and seemingly their hunger affected their ability to concentrate on and retain the lines. Therefore, Elaine planned to bring fruit cups, applesauce, and juice for breakfast. The session closed with prayer. Elaine thanked the contextual associates for their time and contribution to the project. One associate asked if she could bring the lunch for the following week. Elaine heartily agreed.

Surprisingly, Elaine received the scripture, Matthew 21: 28-32, on Monday (the next day). It was the parable of the two sons. Elaine studied the scripture and compiled her Talking Points,¹² Journal Questions,¹³ and Critique/Analysis Questions.¹⁴ She also transposed the narrative into play form.¹⁵ While she gave a list of journal topics from which to choose, Elaine also mandated the same or similar five questions as the previous week for data continuation and reflection purposes. At the end of the session, while everyone was packing up, one student approached Pastor and told him that she wanted to be baptized. He told Elaine this and asked Elaine to be responsible for telling her mother. Elaine agreed.

¹²See Appendix D.

¹³See Appendix F.

¹⁴See Appendix E.

¹⁵See Appendix C.

Session two was held on September 26, 2010. When Elaine went to pick up the three girls, she learned that they were not going. She was disheartened. When she arrived at Immanuel Bethel, she saw no children. She began to panic. She saw one of her adult contextual associates, who was about to teach Sunday school, and another member who was not a part of the project. They were going to attend Sunday school. Elaine then saw a second adult associate. She asked them if they would help her with her project because she had no kids. Ellen informed her that the two baptism candidates were in with Pastor. After the first associate told Elaine what she had to do, and that the non-involved member was doing the same, Elaine was very upset. She went back into the rehearsal room and sat. About five minutes later, the three women entered the room, and pledged their support of her and her project. The first associate referred to the Pastor's sermon topic of the previous week, as she expressed that she needed to be more zealous of God. They said that they would do what was needed to be done. They opened with prayer and examined the Script. They discussed what was going on in the script, and selected parts. They rehearsed the parts and determined the blocking. Each gave input on intonations and motivation, making reference to "You know when you..." They rehearsed numerous times. Then they selected costumes. The two youth came in and were assigned their short roles.

This week, the Rehearsal/Study session did not adhere to its agenda. This was due to the lack of youth there. They did have discussions that disclosed comprehension as they rehearsed, however. Their laughter indicated their enjoyment. Two other students came in. They were irregular worshipers, but Elaine included them in the production. One teen-ager, who was very shy, was the one assigned to feed the dropped lines. Her little

brother, who was very young, was placed as an extra. It ended up that there were enough students to fully cast the play, but since the adults had practiced it, Elaine thought it best to leave things in place as they were. Although different because of characterization, the dramatization went well. After the presentation, the youth went straight to the back of the church to hear the sermon. Upon completion of the sermon, Elaine led the youth to the meeting room where to begin the journaling process. After worship, they were joined by the adults.

The Critique/Analysis session began with prayer. Nine adults and six youth were in attendance. The teenager and her brother did not remain for the duration of the meeting. Because she was not an original member of the contextual associates, there was no journal specifically for her. However, two others were usually absent, so Elaine gave them theirs. The teenager did not answer all of the questions. Elaine had already distributed the Journal Questions, so the associates just came in and went straight to work. The one adult associate from last week supplied the lunch, as previously agreed.

Upon the beginning of the analysis discussion, Elaine asked about their concerns. One concern was about the participation of the adults when there were enough youth. Elaine explained that initially there were no youth, and that early on a decision had to be made about casting. She explained that it was not until near the end of the Rehearsal/Study session that the other youth showed up. As Pastor had dismissed them early as promised, he inquired about the adequacy of their arrival time. Elaine thanked him for his cooperative effort.

Elaine asked for suggestions for improvement. Someone suggested background music during the presentation. Elaine asked for topics to add when teaching the lesson.

One suggestion was to emphasize the notion of obedience. Elaine brought up her project's New Testament scripture, James 1:25, and asserted that the doers will be blessed in their doing. The session closed in prayer by Elaine.

Session three began at 9:00 A.M. on October 3, 2010. The Rehearsal/Study session opened with prayer. For the first forty-five minutes there were only three students in attendance, for the now, three baptism candidates met with Pastor. The increasing number of baptism candidates is indicative of the overall effect of the project and the youth's participation therein. Again, it must be noted that although the project had been in place for only a couple of weeks, these youth have been engaged in it for several months. The researcher believes that the availability of a platform (dramatic presentations) upon which they can express themselves and be affirmed by the Pastor in his sermons is what attracted these students. Their repeated engagement in Biblical-script study educates them, and it is through their discovery of relevance via application of the scriptures to their own lives that they are transformed. The scripture was Luke 17:11-19. It was the narrative in which Jesus healed ten with leprosy¹⁶.

Elaine had the students read the scripture first in their Bibles. Elaine asked them what happened. One student said that "Some people were healed and they praised God." Another student stated that she did not know. Elaine led them into reading the script that she had written. She encouraged them to read it with expression. This time when she asked what happened, the student who stated that "they all praised God" corrected herself, and stated that only one person praised.

Elaine explained that this was a lesson on gratitude. She explains that oftentimes while people are sick, they call on Jesus to heal them; but once they have been healed,

¹⁶See Appendix C.

they forget or even neglect to thank God. She explains that God wants everyone to show gratitude to God. God wants them to acknowledge that all things come from God.

Elaine asked the students to self-reflect and name a time when they believed that they had been ungrateful. The students named times when their parents had brought them shoes, and they did not thank them. Their ability to name situations spoke to the applicability of the scripture to their lives today.

Elaine then asked them to reflect upon a time when someone was ungrateful to them. She asked them how they felt. One student discussed times when she had helped her younger sister, only to be told that she was supposed to have done it. It made her angry, so the next time she did not help her. Again, relevance is established here.

The other three students joined the group at approximately 9:45 A.M. The group went into the sanctuary to rehearse their parts and practice the blocking. This play was shorter than the previous ones, so the lines were not as difficult to learn. Elaine emphasized articulation and expression. The narrator was allowed to read her parts, but she had to do so with much expression. Elaine took a pause to run into the chancel choir's rehearsal to ask the musician if she could play some background music while the play was being presented. The musician asked if Elaine wanted a particular song. Elaine said she did not. The musician consented.

The students picked their costumes. The selection of costumes ran longer than usual because the students could not decide on which costumes to choose. Perhaps assigning the costumes in advance might be a good strategy to help avoid tardiness in the future. This was something to consider, but Elaine liked giving the students input opportunities. Afterwards they had prayer for a successful and focused presentation. The

students requested prayer that they would remember their lines and not mess up. This suggests that they were taking ownership of their role as ministers of the word of God. Because of the indecisive costuming antics, and the lengthy prayer, the cast was late entering the sanctuary. Elaine had instructed the students to go to the front and go right into their presentation [without an introduction]. She wanted their performance to seem less like a production and more like an integral part of worship. The students walked quickly to the front and successfully executed the presentation. Afterwards, they went straight to the back of the church to sit down without removing their costumes. Pastor Ray thanked the students for the presentation.

Upon completion of the Pastor's sermon entitled, "The Grace of Gratitude", Elaine escorted the students to the meeting room where she and one student distributed journals and journal questions¹⁷ and pens. The adult contextual associates joined the group at the end of worship. They came in and Pastor led the group in prayer. There were nine adults present. Two adults were absent and one helped with serving. Six youth and six adults made entries in their journals.

Elaine asked her questions for the Critique/Analysis session.¹⁸ She inquired about the music and whether or not it was a distraction. The associates expressed that they really liked the music because it added nostalgia.

Elaine asked for concerns. One concern was that the youth were late. Elaine apologized about the tardiness, and assured that it would not happen again. She realized that having and adhering to timelines are a must for avoiding distractions and factors such as tardiness take away from worship service.

¹⁷See Appendix F.

¹⁸See Appendix E.

Elaine expressed concern that the narrative called for ten lepers and there were not enough actors. She asked how that went over. The adults stated that it was not a problem, as long as the message was clear and they could get the gist of the story.

Elaine called to their attention that she purposefully did not announce the youth because she wanted it to be less of a presentation and more of a regular part of worship. Two of the contextual associates said that they noticed it and that it felt different—more holy.

Elaine questioned the associates on questions they would ask if they were teaching a lesson on this scripture. Some of the responses were “the issue of faith,” that “they all came to Jesus believing,” “having an attitude of gratitude,” “explaining the psyche of those who did not come back,” and “God wants gratitude in all things.” The session closed with Elaine leading prayer.

Session Four began at 9:00 A.M, on October 17, 2010. There had been no session held the previous week. The scripture was Luke 5: 1-11, in which Jesus called his disciples. The session opened with prayer. While there were nine students in attendance altogether, there were only six at the session initially, because the other three were with Pastor for forty-five minutes. Again, those three students were cast in parts requiring less speaking. First, they read the scripture in their Bibles [educate]. When Elaine asked them to tell what happened, no one could summarize what had happened.

The students then read the scripted version of the scripture.¹⁹ When Elaine asked them again to summarize the passage, three students stated that they understood it better, and were able to articulate many of the narrative’s major events. Elaine then highlighted

¹⁹See Appendix C.

her Talking Points.²⁰ She discussed how Jesus was teaching by the lake, and asserted that church can take place anywhere. At 9:45 A.M. the group was joined by the other three students. Elaine talked about the spirit of willingness, and stated that one must be willing to make an effort to get things done. When Jesus instructs Peter, Peter obeyed, although he was tired. Also important was the notion to keep trying. Although Peter had failed, he gave it yet another try. Elaine explained that Christians must do the same.

Elaine asked the students how this scripture could apply to them in any way. One student said that if she wanted to get good grades on a test, she could study until she felt she was ready. Elaine assigned roles. Then the students went into the sanctuary to practice. One associate helped with set design. She wanted to make a fishing boat prop and net, but so much time was given to their attention that Elaine became anxious about whether or not the students would know their parts. However, the youth were prepared despite the decreased rehearsal time.

After rehearsing, the students selected their costumes. Then they said a prayer and asked God to bless their performance. The students performed the scripture. They spoke loudly, clearly and successfully executed their blocking. Afterwards, they sat and listened to the sermon entitled, “Move Out, Work Out and Look Out.” They sat and listened attentively. Upon the sermon’s completion, they proceeded to the meeting room to make their journal entries according to the questions.²¹

At the end of the service they were joined by the adults. The Critique/Analysis session opened with prayer. Nine youth and nine adults were in attendance. The students and adults made entries in their journals. Elaine began with the week’s Critique/Analysis

²⁰See Appendix C.

²¹See Appendix F.

questions.²² She asked them if they had any concerns. Three of the contextual associates stated that they missed seeing a scripture dramatized the previous week. When Elaine asked about the music as an addition to the overall tone, the contextual associates agreed that was nice. One adult called to attention the fact that the musician chose the song, "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus," which was very appropriate, and suggested that perhaps the musician should receive the scriptures in advance, also, so that she, too, can coordinate the music with the scripture for the week.

The youngest associate said that she did not really understand the story. Some of the associates told her to pray for understanding, and that if she did, God would give her wisdom for understanding. Another student made the suggestion for Elaine to send the youth the Scriptural text in advance, so that they could become more familiar with it. Elaine asked the associates what questions they would ask if they were teaching the lesson. Some of their responses were that they would discuss obedience to God. Others said they would discuss going out into the deep. Others said, "Giving up everything to allow God" Elaine thanked the contextual associates for their commitment and hard work. They closed in prayer.

Session five was held on October 24, 2010, at 9:00A.M. The scripture was John 11:1-44. It was the narrative in which Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. The Rehearsal Study session began with prayer. There were six youth in attendance. The students read the scriptures from their Bibles. Elaine noticed that it was lengthy. When asked to

²²See Appendix E.

summarize the scripture, about half of the students could do it. They were paying close attention. The students then read the script for this narrative.²³

Elaine emphasized her Talking Points.²⁴ She talked about this narrative as a story of faith. Elaine asked the youth if this Mary was Jesus' mother. They said no. Elaine quickly ran through the Talking Points. Because of the length of the week's pericope, she was anxious and wanted to make sure there was enough rehearsal time. She cut the Study portion of the session short and proceeded with rehearsal. One associate made an elaborate set with a tomb. She wrapped Lazarus in tissue so that he looked mummified when he came out of the tomb. Because of the length of the passage, Elaine opted to allow the students to use their scripts. The students chose their costumes. The boys wore grey and brown wigs. They had prayer before they performed. The students asked God to allow them to have a good performance.

The performance seemed amazingly real. Although the students used their scripts, they did so when they weren't speaking and some were able to recite their lines without the scripts. Elaine had forgotten to request music from the musician, but she remembered to play anyway, and it was great.

The students received a very warm round of applause and several people said, Amen! during the presentation. The students were pleased with their performance, as well. After their performance, the students sat and listened to the sermon. Then they went

²³See Appendix C.

²⁴See Appendix D.

to the meeting room to make their journal entries. The journal questions for the session were already distributed.²⁵

After worship, the adult contextual associates joined the group. There were six youth and eight adult contextual associates in attendance. While all of the youth wrote in their journals, only six of the adults did so. The Critique/Analysis session opened with prayer led by Pastor Ray. The adults made their journal entries. Elaine began with the Critique/Analysis questions.²⁶

She began by asking for their concerns. One adult began to say how beautiful the presentation was. However, another adult has issue with the wigs the boys wore. He started that they looked like Rick James wigs and suggested that we do something to diminish that look—perhaps cut the bangs or eliminate them altogether. They commented on the narration, stating that it was great. They were pleased with the volume and articulation of the students, as well.

Elaine asked them about the student's usage of the script. They all thought that it worked. They stated that they way they used their scripts did not hinder the presentation in any way. One male teenaged student indicated that using the script helped him to perform better because he did not have to memorize it. Elaine asked about the music. They said that it was fine. When Elaine asked about the clarity of the presentation, the adults found it to be very clear. One student said that she really did not understand it. This was due to the shortened study session, as Elaine had shortened it to allow for more rehearsal time. At that moment Elaine began explaining the scripture to the girl. The adult

²⁵See Appendix F.

²⁶See Appendix E.

contextual associates joined in the discussion until the student had a clear grasp of the passage.

Some of the topics suggested by the associates were the issues of life after death, that life really begins after death, that Jesus' reason for waiting four days was so that the people could believe, that one must have patience when waiting on God, and that one must not take things for granted. Someone also mentioned that sometimes one's faith is tested. The session closed in prayer by another Associate Pastor of the church.

Session Six was held on October 31, 2010. It was the final session. It was the fifth Sunday of the month. Fifth Sundays are deemed youth Sundays at Immanuel Bethel, and on these Sundays, Elaine is in charge. This means that Elaine has to select all the music for the day, teach the music to the youth, select the scriptures, transpose the scriptures into a script, rehearse the play, write a sermon, and preach the sermon.

The scripture for the day was taken from the United Church of Christ's Lectionary. Coincidentally, it was Luke 19:1-10, the story of Jesus and Zachaeus, and the sermon topics title was Transforming Love.²⁷ Elaine found this title quite befitting, as her project purports to bring about a transformation in the hearers and the doers alike.

The Rehearsal/Study session opened with prayer. Elaine had the students to read the scripture first in their Bibles she asked them to summarize what they had read. While the youth were able to give an account of the main events in the passage, they demonstrated that they did not understand why there was such a problem with Jesus' visit

²⁷See Appendix K.

to Zacchaeus' house. Elaine led them to read the passage again, but this time in play form.²⁸

Elaine asked the students if they know what the problem was and one student stated that the crowd members believed Zacchaeus to be a sinner. Elaine began to refer to her Talking Points for session six.²⁹ She explained the role of tax collectors, and how they got rich and were hated by everyone in town.

Elaine asked why Zacchaeus would want to see Jesus. The students responded that perhaps he felt guilty. Elaine talked about the length to which Zacchaeus went to see Jesus (trying to jump over a crowd who blocked his view and then climbing a tree).

Elaine explained to the students that transformations (changes) occur in people's hearts that make them change their minds and hearts from bad thoughts and deeds to wanting to do right by God. She explained that anyone can change. Elaine also directed the students to the scene on the scripts at which the crowd members proclaimed that Zacchaeus was a sinner and questioned why Jesus was with him. She explicated that the people in the crowd were making judgments about Zacchaeus and warned them against making those types of judgments, for it was neither the crowd members' or their job to do so. Making judgments is God's job, for human do not know—what is going on in a person heart.

Elaine asked the students if they had ever experienced a transformation of any sort, or a change of heart. One student stated that when she decided to become a follower of Jesus she was transformed. It is here that this project's assertion of transformation is best supported. The researcher attributes this student's awareness of transformation to her

²⁸See Appendix C.

²⁹See Appendix D.

participation in this project over both the long and short terms. Her engagement with the scriptures over time fostered her ability to make a personal connection with the biblical narratives and God (Thomas Boomershine's sacramental transference),³⁰ and thus undergo transformation. The researcher would argue that Boomershine's theory of sacramental transference is applicable to all the students who have given their lives to Christ while participating in this project. In fact, not only had this one student given her life to Christ and experienced a change which she regarded as a transformation, so had four others—one more in the spring of 2010, two more students two weeks before the project's implementation began, and one additional student during the actual execution of the project. This is proof that participation in Acting to Act leads to transformation. Another one discussed wanting to fight another student at school and then changing her mind. Elaine explained that when one is transformed, the things that once seemed important no longer do. She explained that this story of Zacchaeus was a story about transformation, and continued to discuss the Zacchaeus's desire to know Jesus, even though he worked in a very deceitful occupation.

The students rehearsed the play. The contextual associate set designer made a tree, so the set was elaborately decorated. They rehearsed in the sanctuary. The students knew their lines well. The students briefly rehearsed the song "How Great is our God," for it was to be their youth selection.

When it was time to pick costumes, Elaine decided to let them wear their choir robes instead, for the song was scheduled immediately before the dramatization, and

³⁰Thomas E. Boomershine, *Story Journey an Invitation to the Gospel as Storytelling* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 21.

there would be no chance to change their clothing without interrupting the flow of worship. The group had prayer and proceeded with worship.

The youth were assigned to conduct various elements of the worship service--announcements, prayer, Old and New Testament readings, take prayer requests, collect the offering, and more. They did all of these speaking tasks without any problems. Their articulation was great; and they spoke with enthusiasm.

When they sang, however, it did not go over as well. The students did not sing out. There was little energy. The soloist seemed afraid. After they sang, they presented the story of Zacchaeus and Jesus in their robes. The musician forgot to play music.

Next, Elaine preached her sermon entitled, *Transforming Love*.³¹ She thanked the church for its allowance of the project. She spoke of the Zacchaeus transformation and the transformations of five of her students who had given their lives to Christ and either already had been or expected to be baptized. She expressed her humble joy that fact.

When the sermon ended the youth and adults went into the meeting room to begin journaling. Elaine passed out the post-surveys to the congregants.³² Five students and nine adults attended the session. However, only four youth and seven adults placed entries in their journals.³³ The Critique/Analysis session began with prayer by the Pastor. Elaine asked the contextual associates if they had any concerns.

One associate spoke of the presentation as a letdown. She stated that the omission of the costumes was a mistake, for the lack of costumes diminished the performance. She stated that no matter what the wigs looked like or of whom one was reminded, they

³¹See Appendix K.

³²See Appendix B.

³³See Appendix F.

should be used, because costumes were indeed significant. The associate then spoke about the song that the students sang "How Great is Our God." She stated that the robes gave her the impression that something big was coming, but the song did not live up to that impression.

Another associate inquired about the music, for it was not played during the presentation. Elaine stated that she had not reminded the musician, for last week she played it on her own. Elaine assumed that she was going to remember to play it that week, as well. The associate said that the background music was missed. Elaine admitted that she had forgotten to remind her. What this mistake says is that alerting all parties must be intentional. One cannot take it for granted that people will remember to do what is needed. People must be given advanced notice of one's request for their participation. The changes that the associate said they would keep costumes and music .They said that the song needed more practice.

Elaine asked the youth how they had been affected by their participation in this project. One student stated that participation in this ministry has made him do his school work better. This is the same student who complained about the length of writing he had to do during the first session. Again, here is a byproduct of transformation in these students' lives, this time in the area of responsibility. Another student said that it made her speak out more (a transformation of confidence), and a third student stated that it had taught her more scriptures and it helps her to memorize them. The researcher believes that these factors have served as attractors for the youth, as well; they are seeing the work of God in their live and are becoming better persons. This keeps them coming back. Their ultimate baptism was the outward step towards their retention.

Elaine asked everyone for final comments. An adult associate spoke about the project having been a blessing for the church. She spoke about the teaching component it had, and the life-like qualities it brought to the scriptures. Pastor stated that he hated for the project to end. He appreciated the process and the effect of it. He really wanted the project to be permanent addition to the worship service. The other associates agreed. Elaine asked if they could wait until the beginning of the year. Pastor agreed. The session closed with prayer by Pastor, Elaine, the youth and other associates who had something to add.

Journal Data

As far as the Journal data for session one goes, Elaine took information from their journals and compiled it. While she initially gave them a list of questions from which to choose, as she was approached by one context associate about the data being too scattered to give a real enough reflection of what they felt and believed. Elaine agreed and the group decided each week on the questions they would answer. Even after this process, however in some instances, some of the associates did not completely respond to the selected questions.

For the first session, seven journal entries were completed by the youth and six journal entries by the adults. The associates were not allowed to discuss their answers. The associates were asked to restate the scripture for the day.³⁴ Fifty-seven percent of the youth could do it. Eighty-three percent of the adults could, also. The percentage of youth who could not state the scripture could be attributed to the fact that two of them were not present in class when the scripture was introduced.

³⁴See Table 1.

The second question was designed to depict their understanding of the scripture.³⁵ The question asked them to tell what the scripture was about. Fifty-seven percent of the youth and sixty-seven percent of the adults did this successfully. Some retold the narrative, while others discussed the overall topic of shrewdness and dishonesty in all things ungodly and not enough of that same shrewdness in all things Godly.

The third question supports the educational dimension that is asserted in this project. It was the question of whether the dramatization of that scripture aided the contextual associates in their understanding of it.³⁶ Fifty-seven percent of the youth stated that it did and sixty-seven percent of the adults thought so, as well.

As the researcher asserted earlier, applicability of the scriptures to the lives of the youth is essential in order for them to find meaning, and thus make connections. The next question on the survey addressed that notion, soliciting the number of associates who found the weeks' scriptures applicable in some way to their own lives.³⁷ Forty-three percent of the youth stated that they found it applicable while 100 percent of the adults did so. The researcher found the youth's rankings low, but attributes it to the fact that because two of them missed the study component of the rehearsal, they were really unclear with what they were applying. Nonetheless, the applicability factor here was low.

In terms of attraction, the percentage of associates who liked the performance was fourteen percent amongst the youth and eighty-three percent of the adults.³⁸ The researcher attributes the youth's low likeability rate speaks to their own self-criticism and

³⁵See Table 2.

³⁶See Table 3.

³⁷See Table 4.

³⁸See Table 5.

the high expectations they have set for themselves when it comes to performing. The fact that so many lines were dropped netted a poor performance, and no, they did not like it. This implied rate of ownership of their performance also speaks to the respect and integrity they have for the ministry they provide.

The journal entry data for session two contains similarities and differences to the previous week's entries. For session two, three youth and eight adults made entries in their journals. Of those making entries the results were as follows. From week one to week two, there was an increase in the number of persons who remembered the scripture³⁹ for both the youth and the adults. This is again an attestation of the educational value of the project—that the project will help hearers and doers learn the word.

While the number of youth who demonstrated understanding of the scripture rose from session one to session two, the number of adults who demonstrated their understanding decreased by seventeen percentage points.⁴⁰ In fact, the trend for the adults continued to drop even for the third session. By session five, however, their demonstration of understanding rose twelve percentage points and by week six, it tripled from week three to 100 percent adult demonstration.

Question three of the journal data depicts those who found that the dramatization aided in their understanding of the week's scripture.⁴¹ The youth's responses dropped by twenty-four percentage points by in week two. This is understandable because there really was no study session at which the youth were present. The increases of over thirty percentage points for the next two sessions align with the increase the youth showed for

³⁹See Table 1.

⁴⁰See Table 2.

⁴¹See Table 3.

their demonstration of understanding.⁴² The youth's rate of demonstration continued to rise gradually for the sessions three and four, and contrarily took a sharp dive from sixty-three percent to thirty-three percent in week five, at which it stayed constant in week six. While they felt that the dramatization had not aided their comprehension in week five, the largest percentage of youth demonstrating understanding during the entire project was projected in week five.⁴³ This misalignment might be due to the relief of stress that accompanies the use of the script, which occurred during this presentation. The sharp decrease to thirty-three percent in session six align, as well, to the fact that that same percentage demonstrated their understanding.

In terms of the applicability of the week's scripture for week two, which was the fourth journal entry topic,⁴⁴ only thirty-three percent of the youth deemed the scripture as such. This was a decrease by ten percentage points. The adults, on the other hand, remained steady with 100 percent of them being able to apply the scriptures to their lives. Overall, the adults found each week's scripture applicable at an average rate of sixty-five percent, and the youth did so at a rate of sixty-five percent.

The final journal question addressed the admiration of the contextual associates for the week's performance.⁴⁵ This chart was the most volatile. Session two showed a drastic increase in those youth who like the performance, while the rate dropped in session three, the play about Jesus healing the ten with leprosy. Sessions four and five boasted the highest rates of admiration of the performances about Lazarus' death and

⁴²See Table 2.

⁴³See Table 2.

⁴⁴See Table 4.

⁴⁵See Table 5.

Jesus calling his disciples while, week six Jesus and Zacchaeus) had astounding rates of zero percent for both youth and adults.

The journaling technique proved quite revelatory in terms of the effectiveness of the dramatizations. First, adults became conscientious about scripture recitation, but they lacked initiative when it came to really delving into the scriptures and being able to articulate in writing what the scripture actually meant. Fairly speaking, however, it could be that they were so intent upon memorizing the scripture that their levels of cognition were inadvertently affected. The youth, on the other hand, had no problem saying what they did not know, and were conscientious in their efforts to improve. The researcher suggests that follow-up reflection is necessary to assist youth with retention of scripture. Perhaps re-visitation of each performance by way of discussion would net better results.

The researcher administered a questionnaire to the youth during the first session to determine their attitudes about the influence of their participation in the drama ministry.⁴⁶ She did not repeat this questionnaire weekly for fear of redundancy and of tiring out the youth with too much of the near-same line of inquiry. What the data revealed was that the students' knowledge of this particular pericope was low. However, it was interesting that the youth placed more value upon the understanding of the scripture as opposed to the mere knowledge of the scripture. In question one, three out of four admitted that they did not know the scripture before that session; yet in question three, they categorized the influence of their engagement with the scripture as comprehensible, as opposed to mere acquaintance. Thus, it appears that comprehension of the scripture is what is important to the youth.

⁴⁶See Appendix H.

The researcher asserts that youth must feel valued in church and their worthiness must be demonstrated through involvement in general worship in order for them to assume greater responsibility for their membership. According to the questionnaire's data, all of the students surveyed felt valued at the church; data also suggests that they valued what they did at the church in terms of the drama ministry, for one hundred percent of them believed that their presentation was a positive addition to the worship service. This favorable attitude is what drives the youth to continue to come and engage themselves in the word.

Pre and Post Survey Data

The customary level of inclusion of youth in regular worship service is minimal four times per year, on the fifth Sunday. A few times per year during the Advent season, youth are asked to participate by lighting the Advent candle. During the church's Easter breakfast and Autumn fest dinner, the youth are asked to assist as servers. However, the latter times are not during worship. The seeming complacency Immanuel Bethel has shown regarding the involvement of the youth is what led the researcher to develop a Pre and Post survey soliciting attitudinal information regarding levels of youth participation in regular worship and the location of their worship. Questions regarding the outcomes brought about appropriately by dramatic presentations are also included in these surveys. The pre-survey was conducted on September 12, 2010, and the post-survey was administered to the congregation on the project's final day of implementation, October 31, 2010. While twenty-seven persons responded to the pre survey, only fifteen responded to the post survey. Thus, there are two categories of data analysis that have

been conducted. First, there will be overall data given on the both surveys to give a picture of where the congregation stood on dramatic worship as a whole. Second, there will be data on the fifteen persons who responded to both, the Pre and Post surveys, in an attempt to determine trends in attitudinal changes. The results follow.

Regarding the notion that youth worship should be held in a completely separate location,⁴⁷ attitudes of those in agreement decreased by thirty-five percent, to yield overall balanced results of forty-six percent in agreement and disagreement with the statement. Regarding the youth sitting in regular worship with their parents,⁴⁸ attitudes of those in agreement at any level decreased by twenty-eight percent from pre survey to post-survey; the number with no opinion increased four-fold. Regarding youth worship occurring in a separate location while coming into regular worship service for a few minutes,⁴⁹ attitudes of those in agreement decreased by forty-five percent to level with those in disagreement and those with no opinion.

In all three cases regarding the location of youth worship, the trend of those who agree to some sort of youth presence in regular worship is about even. This outcome may be due to the fact that in order for the youth to prepare their presentation, they must be separated from the regular worship location. It also could be attributed to the idea of the rehearsal / study time being looked at by some, especially the youth, as youth worship.

The question of frequency preference of youth participation in regular worship youth was raised because its results would determine the viability of Acting to Act in its context at Immanuel Bethel. So does the question of actual appropriateness. If a low

⁴⁷See Table 7.

⁴⁸See Table 8.

⁴⁹ See Table 9.

percentage of those surveyed indicated that they neither wanted to see the youth participate actively at all nor deemed the infusion of drama during worship appropriate, then the project would not have been suitable, but rather, it would have been forced. Therefore, it was important to know the congregants' attitudes toward the frequency of youth participation in regular worship. There was an overall increase of sixteen percent of those who would agree that youth should participate actively in worship every week,⁵⁰ data which supports the comments of those contextual associates who stated that the dramatizations enhanced the service. Those surveyed who preferred bi-weekly participation⁵¹ of youth in regular worship netted an increase of fifty percent in the Post survey, with the bulk of those coming from those who had disagreed in the Pre survey with every other week; for those in disagreement decreased their numbers sharply by seventy-three percent in the post survey. In examining the data regarding appropriateness from another angle, but yielding the same supportive results, it was found that those who disagreed with the notion that dramatized scriptures are not appropriate during worship increased in the Post survey by eighteen percent, from sixty-six to eighty percent.⁵²

Regarding youth participation in worship once a month,⁵³ there was an eighty-eight percent decrease in the attitudes of those who initially agreed to this frequency. The question reflecting the regular practice of having the youth participate in worship every fifth Sunday resulted in those in agreement at any level decreasing by thirty-one percent,

⁵⁰See Table 10.

⁵¹See Table 11.

⁵²See Table 23.

⁵³See Table 12.

leaving a fourteen percent difference between those who agree and those who do not.⁵⁴

Upon completion of the post-survey no one agreed that the youth should never participate in regular worship.⁵⁵ The overall attitudinal trend of those surveyed on the frequency of youth participation in regular worship leaned toward a preference of greater frequency after the project's implementation. Weekly participation ranked highest with eighty percent, followed by a bi-weekly preference of seventy-three percent. This data fully supports not only the appropriateness of this project in its context at Immanuel Bethel, but it is also indicative of the project's effectiveness.

The next set of data reflects the attitudes of those surveyed who agree with the following assertions about the effects of dramatic presentations. The assertion that dramatized scriptures are appropriate for educating youth⁵⁶ increased seven percent from ninety-three percent in agreement in the pre-survey to 100 percent in agreement in the post survey. The assertion that dramatized scriptures during worship is appropriate for educating adults increased by thirty percent, from seventy percent from seventy one percent to ninety-three percent.⁵⁷ While the effect felt by the adult parishioners was minimal, it did increase. The overwhelming increase for the youth population solidifies this project's educational value. In addition, the suggestion that dramatized scriptures during worship are appropriate for making scriptures easier to understand⁵⁸ also supports the project's asserted educational value; it drew a moderate shift in attitudes of those

⁵⁴See Table 13.

⁵⁵See Table 14.

⁵⁶See Table 15.

⁵⁷See Table 16.

⁵⁸See Table 17.

persons in agreement. Nineteen percent more of those persons surveyed in the post survey agreed with the assertion.

The researcher's proposal that dramatized scriptures during worship are appropriate for the attraction of youth is supported by this data addressing that question, as well.⁵⁹ The rate of those who agreed to any degree remained steady for both the pre and Post surveys, reflecting an eighty-six to eighty-seven percent rate of agreement; thirteen percent had no opinion. That this data remained steady might be due to the fact that elements of the project had already been in place, and the same students had remained at Immanuel Bethel. The data remained steady regarding the retention of youth, as well, indicating no notable adjustments in those who either agreed or disagreed with the assertion.

Regarding the notion that dramatized scriptures during worship are appropriate for retaining adults,⁶⁰ of those surveyed, the rate of agreement remained steady at approximately seventy-three to seventy-seven percent. There was a decrease, however in those who strongly disagreed, which is indicative of even the adults' buy-in to the concept of infusing dramatic scriptures into worship. The researcher asserts that dramatized scriptures are appropriate for changing lives. The results of the Pre and Post surveys suggest agreement with this assertion.⁶¹ It illustrates that the number of persons who agreed increased in the post-survey, while those in agreement increased by thirteen percentage points.

⁵⁹See Table 18.

⁶⁰See Table 20.

⁶¹See Table 21.

While sixty-three percent of those surveyed disagreed with the idea in the pre-survey that dramatized scriptures were appropriate for entertainment only, there were twenty-six percent of those surveyed who agreed with idea. However, that number decreased by twenty-three percent⁶² from nineteen to thirteen percent.

Regarding whether dramatized scriptures have a positive effect on the character of Immanuel Bethel, the responses were as follows: In the post survey there was a seven percent increase of those in agreement at any level that dramatic presentations during worship affect the character of the church positively⁶³ yielding one hundred percent agreement. The same 100 percent statistic resulted when the respondents answered the question of the negative impact of drama in worship; they disagreed that there was a negative impact.⁶⁴ When asked whether they agreed that dramatized presentations had no effect on the church's character, an overwhelming fifty-six percent had no opinion on the pre-survey. However, following full implementation, the percentage of those with no opinion was reduced to thirty-three.⁶⁵

When asked to define or describe the character of Immanuel Bethel various responses were given.⁶⁶ However, no two responses were the same. What this says is that Immanuel Bethel means many things to many people. It is a place that offers various traits that appeal to others. What the researcher did was took several of the character traits—promoting God, better serving youth, a church of committed believers, and how

⁶²See Table 22.

⁶³See Table 24.

⁶⁴See Table 25.

⁶⁵See Table 26.

⁶⁶See Table 27.

we worship, and sought to uphold those in the project. Acting to Act has been successful in doing that.

Same Persons Data Analysis

As the researcher wants to give an overall depiction of the results of all the persons responding to the Pre and Post surveys, she also wants to give a clearer depiction of attitudinal changes of the individuals who completed both surveys. Out of the twenty-six who completed the initial survey, only fifteen completed the Post survey. The following data reflects those who took and completed both surveys.

In terms of the location of youth worship, of the same respondents surveyed thirty-four percent shifted to preferences denoting more frequent youth worship in the regular worship service. Forty-six percent of them indicated initially that youth should be in regular worship even if for a few minutes.⁶⁷ Twenty percent of respondents reflected negative attitudes in favor of a more separate youth worship location.⁶⁸ This shift in preference towards youth worship in the regular service clears the path for this project.

Regarding the frequency of youth participation during the regular service, the attitudes of thirteen percent of those surveyed remained steady, preferring that the youth limit their combined worship to monthly. However, an overwhelming eighty-two percent more of those surveyed had a shift in attitude from either category to weekly. Another

⁶⁷See Table 28.

⁶⁸See Table 29.

thirteen percent held fast to their conviction that the youth should participate in regular worship weekly.⁶⁹

Table 31⁷⁰ illustrates that the average shift in attitudes regarding the appropriateness of dramatic presentations during worship for educating youth, educating adults, simplifying the scriptures, attracting youth, retaining adults and changing lives, was twenty-three percent. On average, those already in strong agreement with the aforementioned outcomes were at forty-one percent. The sum of the two averages nets a very favorable attitude toward the outcome assertions made by the researcher that the infusion of drama into worship brings about these ends.

In terms of non-appropriateness, seventy-nine percent of respondents in both the pre-and post-surveys stood in disagreement that dramatic presentations during worship were for entertainment only; while seventy-three percent of those surveyed disagreed with the notion that dramatic presentations were altogether inappropriate for worship.⁷¹

The average of attitude shifts that were unfavorable to dramatic presentations during worship for the same outcomes was twelve percent, with those outcomes least agreed upon being those involving educating and retaining adults⁷² These results do not stand in opposition to the researcher's project or assertions, but rather allow for a greater, more favorable response regarding adults' education and retention.

⁶⁹See Table 30.

⁷⁰See Table 31.

⁷¹See Table 32.

⁷²See Table 33.

Table 34⁷³ shows the percentage of respondents whose responses stayed the same, in favor of dramatic presentations during worship and the outcomes they cause. This means that these respondents either strongly or somewhat agreed to its appropriateness for the listed effects. This is important because it reflects pre-existing attitudes conducive to the longevity of the project.

Table 35⁷⁴ depicts the respondents who shifted to strongly agree and that somewhat agree that dramatic presentations had a positive effect on the character of Immanuel Bethel. While roughly sixty-seven percent of those surveyed held fast to their strong beliefs in the positive impact of the infusion, others who shifted did so at an average rate of eleven percent.

Regarding whether dramatic presentations negatively affect the character of Immanuel Bethel, attitude shifts of eighty percent of those surveyed were in strong disagreement while fourteen percent held no opinions.⁷⁵

Twenty-seven percent of those surveyed regarding whether dramatic presentations had no impact on the church's Character had positive shifts in their attitudes. Over half of those surveyed had previously disagreed with the assertions, and held fast to their stance.⁷⁶

⁷³See Table 34.

⁷⁴See Table 35.

⁷⁵See Table 36.

⁷⁶See Table 37.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

This project is a six-week project, by description. However, it is not new at Immanuel Bethel. Elaine has been infusing drama in youth worship since the onset of her call to the church in September of 2007. Each week in a separate youth worship service, she infused drama into the lessons. She also infused drama on the fifth Sundays, when she preached; so while the youth were not performing in the regular worship service every week, they did have opportunities to re-enact the scriptures on a regular basis. The difference between then and now is that there was no sermon in youth worship, just the Talking Points in the context of a discussion.

The three sisters have attended as long as Elaine. For two of them, their decisions to join the church and accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior did not occur overnight. While the education and enjoyment they derived through the weekly dramatizations kept them coming to church, their assumption of their existence as Christians occurred nearly three years later, an indication that to attract youth is only half the task. The other half, retaining them is the key to the overall success of influencing their lives toward Christ and gaining their commitment to the church. It takes time and hard work, and a program that effectively reaches out to them in ways that they can hear. The implementation of *Acting to Act: A Youth-centered, Drama-infused Paradigm of*

Christian Education that Reflects Scripture is indeed a model of such a project that achieves those ends.

What occurred that Elaine did not expect was the revelation that about one-third of the youth present at each session found the week's scripture non-applicable to their lives. This was disappointing because of her strong belief that youth need to see relativity in the scriptures in order to grow. The implication here is that the youth might become discouraged by the scripture's irrelevance, and they might in turn, turn away from the teachings and the church altogether. However, this project is evidence to the contrary; fortunately, the fact that after week three's performance, one student gave her life over to Christ, and wanted to be baptized counters the implication.

Another unexpected occurrence was that the play which was presented during her week of preaching turned out to be the least preferred, according to the data. Elaine attributes these findings to a few factors. First was the lack of costumes. Because the students acted and sang that day, Elaine opted that they wear their robes instead of costumes. Costuming is essential to the establishment of the setting, the era of the scriptures, and is one element of dramatic presentation that should never be omitted. Second, was the lapse of memory of their parts. This proved to be a great distraction. Session six was held on Youth Sunday. The students were engaged in several aspects of the worship service—the announcements, the choir, the prayer, and scripture reading. This may have proven to be too much for them, too much to focus on. It is imperative that whoever is participating in the dramatic ministry portion of the worship service does so with complete omission of all other duties in order that their focal commitment can be to that project fully. Third, was the omission of background music, to which they had

become accustomed. The atmosphere needs to be set; and music does this favorably. It would really be a plus to include musicians in the alignment of the week's performance by informing them of the week's scripture in advance, as well, and collaborating on timing and other elements.

Overall, this project has served as a valuable learning experience for the researcher and her context, and has proven to be an invaluable tool for Christian education, enhancement of worship, and attraction and retention of youth. The fact that the Pastor has requested that it continue proves that it has a place at the church. Yes, there were some challenges. The absence of youth at the beginning of session two was one of them. However, the adults stepped up and the project moved forward. An astounding lesson was learned here. The fact that both youth and adults have served as actors effectively shows it to be suitable for all ages. The ministry does not have to be limited to youth.

What the researcher learned personally from the project was the importance of knowing one's context and evaluating it to see if what one brings to the context is indeed what is needed. She also learned that she does not have to do all things for and by herself all the time, as there are many who are willing to help out if she would simply ask. The researcher learned to take constructive criticism from others and to respect the opinions of others; and she learned that there is value in allowing congregants to have a say in what is happening in the church.

When the congregants were asked to define the character of Immanuel Bethel, no two persons gave the same answers. However, there were a few evident trends. The main trend involved their belief in God the reflection of their belief in God. The second trend

was their culture of family and friendliness. Contrary to this description, however, was an interesting categorization of what one member believed was the church's level of character. The member suggested that the church's level of character was comprised more of tolerance than total inclusion and receptivity. In either case, this project did neither compromise nor alter what they believed their character to be. In terms of depicting the church's belief in God, the project was Bible-centered, with few frills (such as over-sized gestures in attempts to evoke laughter, games, employment of events that do not necessarily relate, and more).

Regarding the maintenance of character traits of a family and friendly culture, the project fulfilled that very need. It bridged the gap between the youth and the adults, as the adults saw value in the gift of Scriptural interpretation and revelation that the youth bring to the church, thus an indication of the youth's value. The Critique/Analysis sessions provided opportunities for the youth to interact with each other, to include helping each other and talking to each other. Finally, in terms of tolerance and inclusion, the church displayed both each week as they embraced each presentation. Thus, overall, the presentations only enhanced the worship service.

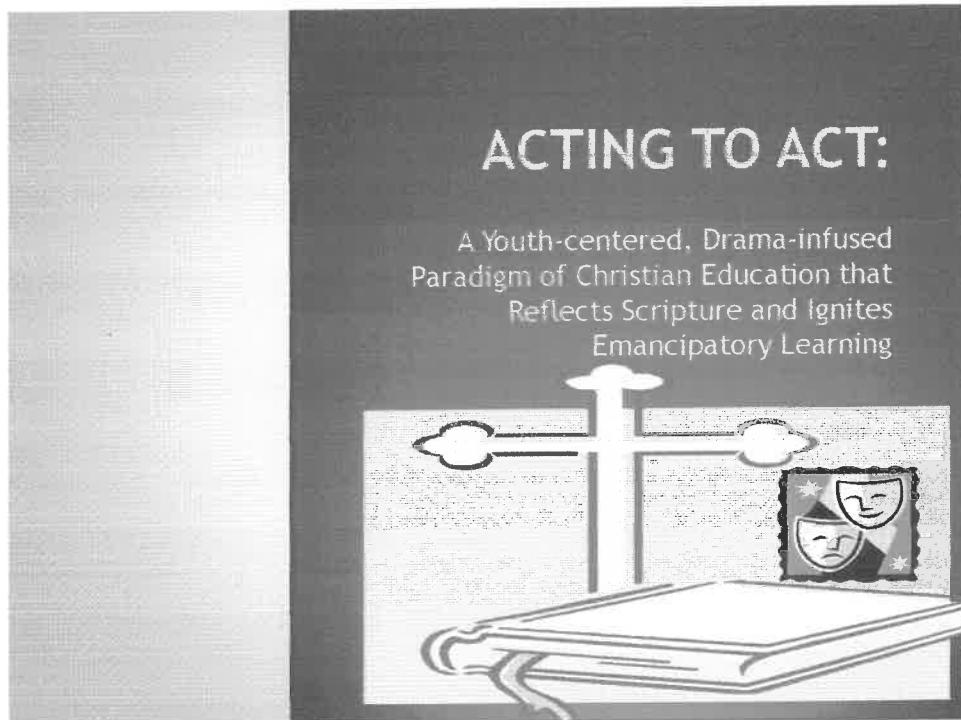
One thing the researcher would do differently is to add another educational component in the form of immediate follow-up for the performers, so that they can once-again engage the scripture for clarity. Another thing that the researcher would do differently is that she would not deem it a project that speaks solely to African-Americans, for what she had found is that it extends beyond not just age boundaries, but racial boundaries, as well. The rebellious teen was not African-American, but rather Caucasian, and he was transformed through his participation; therefore, to limit this

project to one particular race would do a disservice to its demonstrated limitless possibilities. A third change the researcher would make is in the area of rehearsal time—she would extend it. Each performance requires a minimum of two-and-a-half hours of rehearsal time in order to be effectively performed. This suggested time may vary if the parts are pre-assigned and memorized ahead of time; otherwise, the minimum two-and-a-half hours are recommended. The final change she would make is to use the same version of the Bible that the Pastor uses. Instead of opting for the version that she finds most favorable, the NRSV, the researcher would use the version that is being employed in the sermon. This is essential for better alignment, correlation, and clarity during the study periods.

The attitudinal reverse, or transformation, that occurred with the rebellious teen-aged student supports the entire hypothesis of the project—if youth were provided with Christian education that reflects scripture in ways that are appealing, relevant to their life situations, and render the youth valuable, then not only would they be attracted to the church and the Christian faith, but they would sense their worth, take ownership of their places as members of the church, and therefore, would remain in the church. When this young man came to Immanuel Bethel, he was argumentative against the teachings of the Bible and beliefs of the church. The researcher asked him to stick around and give God a chance. He did. The student volunteered at Immanuel Bethel's Vacation Bible School every night. He needed help getting out of a bind and he came to the church for help. He told Elaine that he was seeking the Lord, just as she had told him to do. He earned a recommendation from the church and his issue of concern turned out in his favor. This student made the statement that the writing component of the project was also helping

him with his school work. Now his life appears to be moving in a favorable direction towards God and a right relationship with God. He plans to go to college when he graduates from high school in the spring of 2011. Elaine asked him where he was going to go to college and if he was going away. He stated that he wanted to stay nearby so that he could come to church. It is here that this project's assertion of retention, one of the main goals of the project, applies. If youth who stumble upon Immanuel Bethel in search of a word from God (as did this young man), are attracted to the scriptures (as was this young man), and learn the word of God (as did/does this young man), and decide that they must remain in the church (as did this young man), then they, too will validate the effectiveness of the project, *Acting to Act: A Youth-centered, Drama-infused Paradigm of Christian Education that Reflects Scripture and Ignites Emancipatory Learning*, and will thusly, fulfill the needs of Immanuel Bethel in terms of youth retention carrying on the work of the church. Elaine has created the model of Christian Education she set out to develop and has proven its effectiveness in her context at Immanuel Bethel United Church of Christ, and has shown that it can expand beyond that context to neighborhoods of other ethnicities and other age groups. It is the researcher's prayer that this model will be employed by churches everywhere that are in need of a way to attract and retain youth in the church, for they have one in Acting to Act.

APPENDIX A
POWERPOINT



IN OTHER WORDS...

- Book of plays
- Utilizes Youth
- Reflects Scripture
- Infused into worship
- Mode of Christian Education
 - Provides for various styles of learning
 - Provides Bible Study during worship
 - Youth learn actual Scriptures as opposed to themes
 - Maintains character of the Church

DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

◎ Synergism

- Contextual Analysis
- Spiritual Autobiography
- Meeting between...
 - Needs of IBUCC
 - Needs and gifts of Elaine

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

- ◎ Majority seniors at IBUCC
- ◎ Concerned with longevity of IBUCC
- ◎ Maintain character of the church
- ◎ Few youth in the church
- ◎ IBUCC located in heart of African-American community
- ◎ Need way to attract and retain youth to carry on legacy of IBUCC

SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

- ◎ Educator
- ◎ Playwright
- ◎ Called to ministry
- ◎ Not-so-popular choices
- ◎ If known more Scripture, would have made better choices
- ◎ Desire to teach Scripture to youth to influence their decision-making
 - How to make it relevant to today
 - The importance of knowing it
 - What God expects of them/How Jesus handled it

IBUC's NEEDS + ELAINE = EFFECTIVE MINISTRY

- ◎ Attract youth (Drama)
- ◎ Teach Scripture (To actors and congregation through learning, dramatizing, watching, and preaching)
- ◎ Retain youth (Have a place in worship, are actually growing and transforming as they engage in dramatic presentations)
- ◎ Maintain Character (Focused on Scripture, presented with reverence and integrity)

PROJECT COMPONENTS...

- ◎ Consent/Commitment forms signed (ASAP)

- Context Associates

- Youth Group= M.F., J.F., A.A., A.A., A.A., R.S. W.L.

- Adult Group= M.H., J.N., E. N., C.Y., R.Y., P.R., P.K.

PRE-SURVEY

- ◎ Sept. 12

- ◎ Attitudinal

- ◎ Congregation and Contextual Associates

“ACTING TO ACT” IMPLEMENTATION

◎ Drama infused into worship weekly

- Pastor Ray provides weekly Scripture by Wednesday of each week
- Youth CAs meet to interpret Scripture 9:00-10:30
- 5-7 minute Scriptural dramatizations
- 12:00-12:45 Youth and adult CAs meet to journal and discuss presentation
- 6-week duration (Sept. 19-Oct. 31)
- REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED

POST-SURVEY

◎ Oct. 24

◎ Congregation and Contextual Associates

APPENDIX B

SAMPLES

Commitment Letter

August 29, 2010

Dear _____,

As you know I am working on my Doctor of Divinity degree at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. First, I want to thank you for your support of me as I endeavor upon such an intense task. Also, thank you for all the support you have given to our youth. You can recall that I spoke to you earlier in the spring about being a Contextual Associate this fall. Well, the time has come. I am now in Phase IV of the program—the IMPLEMENTATION phase of my project—“Acting to Act: A Youth-centered, Drama-infused Paradigm of Christian Education that Reflects Scripture and Ignites Emancipatory Learning”, and it is in this phase that you get to participate. It is the most exciting phase of the program because I get to hear the input of those in my actual context. While this project is one that may be used globally, it was developed **specifically for Immanuel Bethel**. Thus, your input will be quite valuable and relevant. As one of ten contextual associates, you will be helping me to develop, and determine the feasibility and effectiveness of the project through a series of brief meetings during which we will be doing critiques, analyses, journal entries, surveys and more. Refreshments will be served at each meeting. ☺ Please read and sign the attached commitment letter and return it to me by next Sunday, September 5, 2010. Again, thank you for agreeing to participate and I am very excited about having you onboard.

Sincerely yours,

Pastor Elaine

Meeting Schedule

Meeting Date	9:00 – 10:30	11:45 - 12:45
Sept. 12, 2010	9:00 – 10:30	11:45 - 12:45
Sept. 19, 2010	9:00 – 10:30	11:45 - 12:45
Sept. 26, 2010	9:00 – 10:30	11:45 - 12:45
Oct. 3, 2010	9:00 – 10:30	11:45 - 12:45
Oct. 24, 2010	9:00 – 10:30	11:45 - 12:45
Oct. 31, 2010		

Context Asso. & Youth

Youth 11:45 - 12:45

August 28, 2010--September 5, 2010

Pastor Elaine Joyner
3420 South Cottage Grove Ave.
#701
Chicago, IL 60616

Dear Pastor Elaine:

I am pleased to confirm that I, _____, support your continued pursuit of your Doctorate Degree in Ministry at the United Theological Seminary, and the development of your project—"Acting to Act: A Youth-Centered, drama-infused Paradigm of Christian Education that Reflects Scripture and Ignites Emancipatory Learning." I realize that the task is not an easy one and that it takes a village to make things happen. I know that I am an integral part of the Immanuel Bethel village and I am willing to give a little of my time and effort to help develop a project that will contribute to the growth of Immanuel Bethel. With this commitment, I express my intent to assist you in the further development of this project by attending the six meeting sessions and giving feedback by way of critiques, analyses, journals, surveys, discussions, and more. Below is my signature indicating my commitment. Thank you, and I look forward to contributing to your project.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Signature

Date

Print Name

Parent Commitment and Permission Form

I give my child[ren], _____, permission to participate in the dissertation implementation. I commit to having my child(ren) at church on the meeting dates.

(Parent's Signature)

Pre- and Post Survey Questions

This survey is intended to contribute to the research project, “Acting to Act: A Youth-Centered, Drama-infused Paradigm of Christian Education that Reflects Scripture and Ignites Emancipatory Learning,” and Determine Immanuel Bethel’s congregants’ attitudes toward drama in worship. Please write the initials of your first and last names for data analysis purposes only. _____

SA-Strongly Agree

SWA-Somewhat Agree

SD- Strongly Disagree

SWD-Somewhat Disagree

NO-No Opinion

Children’s worship should occur...

During regular worship, but in a separate location SA SWA SD SWD NO

During regular worship, sitting with their parents SA SWA SD SWD NO

In a separate location, come in for a few minutes SA SWA SD SWD NO

Children should participate actively in worship services (read scripture, announcements, call to worship, offering etc.)...

Every week SA SWA SD SWD NO

Every other week SA SWA SD SWD NO

Once a month SA SWA SD SWD NO

Fifth Sundays only SA SWA SD SWD NO

Never SA SWA SD SWD NO

Dramatized scriptures during worship are appropriate for...

Educating youth SA SWA SD SWD NO

Educating adults SA SWA SD SWD NO

Making scripture easier to understand SA SWA SD SWD NO

Attracting youth SA SWA SD SWD NO

Retaining youth SA SWA SD SWD NO

Retaining adults SA SWA SD SWD NO

Changing lives SA SWA SD SWD NO

Entertainment only SA SWA SD SWD NO

Not Appropriate SA SWA SD SWD NO

Dramatic presentations during worship affect the “character” of Immanuel Bethel...

Positively SA SWA SD SWD NO

Negatively SA SWA SD SWD NO

No effect SA SWA SD SWD NO

How do you define the “character” of IBUCC? What does the term mean to you?

YOUTH QUESTIONNAIRE
LUKE 16: 1-13: THE PARABLE OF THE DISHONEST MANAGER
Session 1: September 19, 2010

1. Did you know and/or understand this passage of Scripture before today?
____ Yes
____ No

2. The effect that today's Scripture had on today's worship service was that it
____ Enhanced it (made it better, was a positive addition)
____ Interfered negatively with
____ Had no effect

3. Memorizing and acting out this Scripture in worship today influenced me by...
____ Introducing me to this Scripture for the first time
____ Reminding me of this Scripture, for I was already familiar with it.
____ Making the story more clear to me, for now I understand it better
____ Confusing me about the story
____ None of the above

4. Acting out this Scripture helps me to remember it better.
____ True
____ False

5. My participation in this ministry of drama influenced my decision to come to this church today.
____ True
____ False

6. I feel that I am valued at this church.
____ True
____ False

Revised Meeting Schedule

Meeting Date	Youth	Context. Asso. & Youth
Sept. 19, 2010	9:00 – 10:30	11:45 - 12:45
Sept. 26, 2010	9:00 – 10:30	11:45 - 12:45
Oct. 3, 2010	9:00 – 10:30	11:45 - 12:45
Oct. 17, 2010**	9:00 – 10:30**	11:45 - 12:45**
Oct. 24, 2010	9:00 – 10:30	11:45 - 12:45
Oct. 31, 2010	9:00 – 10:30	11:45 - 12:45

Agenda for Weekly Rehearsal/Study Sessions

- I. Opening Prayer
- II. Introduction of Scripture
 - A. Bible Read-thru
 - B. Dramatic Read-thru
- III. Text Discussion
 - A. Students' Interpretations
 - B. Teacher's Input
 - C. Talking Points
- IV. Dramatization Rehearsal
 - A. Group Rehearsal
 - B. Individual Rehearsal
 - C. Group Rehearsal
- V. Closing Prayer

Agenda for Weekly Critique/Analysis Sessions

Opening Prayer

Journal Entry

Questionnaire (If Applicable)

Critique/Analysis

Closing Prayer

APPENDIX C

SCRIPTS

Luke 16: 1-13 (NRSV)
The Parable of the Dishonest Manager
(Session 1)

Characters

Narrator	Jesus	Rich Man	Manager	Debtor 1	Debtor 2
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Narrator: Then Jesus said to the disciples,

Jesus: There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. So he summoned him and said to him,

Rich Man: What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.

Jesus: Then the manager said to himself,

Manager: What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.

Jesus: So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first,

Manager: How much do you owe my master?

Jesus: He answered,

Debtor 1: A hundred jugs of olive oil.

Jesus: He said to him,

Manager: Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.

Jesus: Then he asked another,

Manager: And how much do you owe?

Jesus: He replied,

Debtor 2: A hundred containers of wheat.

Jesus: He said to him,

Manager: Take your bill and make it eighty.

Jesus: And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes. “Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Matthew 21: 28-32
The Parable of Two Sons
(Session Two)

Characters

Jesus	Man	Son 1	Son 2	People
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(Jesus sits teaching. He is surrounded by chief priests and elders.)

Jesus: What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said,

Man: Son, go and work in the vineyard today.

Jesus: He answered,

Son 1: I will not!

Jesus: But later he changed his mind and went.

Son 1: Oh, let me just go on and do it.

Jesus: The father went to the second and said the same;

Man: Son, go and work in the vineyard today.

Jesus: And he answered,

Son 2: I go, Sir;

Jesus: But he did not go.

Son 2: *(Folding his arms.)* I'm not working in any vineyard today. *(He sits.)*

Jesus: Which of the two did the will of his father?"

People: The first.

Jesus: Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

Luke 17:11-19
Jesus Heals Ten with Leprosy
(Session Three)

Characters

Narrator **Jesus** **Nine Lepers** **Single Leper**

Narrator: On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying,

All Lepers: Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!

Narrator: When he saw them, he said to them,

Jesus: (*Pointing to the way of the priests.*) Go and show yourselves to the priests.

Narrator: And as they went, they were made clean. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him.

Single Leper: I am clean! (*He runs to Jesus and lies flat on his face at Jesus' feet.*) Lord, I praise you with my whole heart! You are indeed a healer! You are awesome! Thank you, Lord!

Narrator: And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus asked,

Jesus: Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?

Narrator: Then he said to him,

Jesus: Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.

Luke 5: 1-11(NRSV)
Jesus Calls His First Disciples
(Session 4)

CHARACTERS

Narrator James John Jesus Simon Crowd

Props

Netting Two Rowboats Fish

Narrator: Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God.

Crowd: (*Persons in the crowd say these.*) Jesus! Jesus! I must get closer. I want to hear his teachings! Jesus! Jesus!

Narrator: He saw two boats there at the shore of the lake;

Jesus: I see two boats over there at the shore. (*Jesus walks toward the boats.*)

Narrator: The fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.

Jesus: They are not in their boats. (*He gets into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon.*) Simon, push out a little way from the shore. (*He sits down and teaches the crowd from the boat.*)

Jesus: (*To the crowd.*) And I tell you, one cannot enter the kingdom of God, except that he is saved... (*He says to Simon.*) Simon, push out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.

Simon: Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.

Narrator: When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break.

Simon: Wow! Look at all of this fish! It is so heavy that it is breaking the net! Guys, come over here and help us! We cannot hold all of this fish! And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.

Simon Peter: (*Falling down at Jesus' knees.*) Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!

Narrator: For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken.

James: This is so amazing!

John: Can you believe all of this fish we've taken?

Jesus: Simon, do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.

Narrator: When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

Simon: I am following Jesus!

James: So am I.

John: Yes, I will follow Jesus.

John 11: 1-44
Lazarus' Death
(Session Five)

Characters

Narrator	Jesus	Mary	Martha	Thomas
Disciple 2	Jew 1	Jew 2	Lazarus	

Narrator: Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus,

(Jesus stands, reading a letter.)

Mary's and Martha's Voices: Dear Lord, he whom you love is ill.

Narrator: But when Jesus heard it, he said,

Jesus: This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.

Narrator: Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples,

Jesus: Let us go to Judea again.

Narrator: The disciples said to him,

Thomas: Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?

Narrator: Jesus answered,

Jesus: Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.

Narrator: After saying this, he told them,

Jesus: Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.

Narrator: The disciples said to him,

Disciple 2: Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.

Narrator: Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly,

Jesus: Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.

Narrator: Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow-disciples,

Thomas: Let us also go, that we may die with him.

Narrator: When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus,

Martha: Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.

Narrator: Jesus said to her,

Jesus: Your brother will rise again.

Narrator: Martha said to him,

Martha: I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.

Narrator: Jesus said to her,

Jesus: I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?

Narrator: She said to him,

Martha: Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.

Narrator: When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately,

Martha: (*She walks over to Mary. She whispers.*) The Teacher is here and is calling for you.

Narrator: And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. (*Mary walks to Jesus.*) Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. (*The Jews follow Mary quickly.*) They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him,

Mary: (*She kneels at Jesus' feet. She weeps. The Jews are weeping also.*) Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.

Jesus: (*Jesus turns his back to her for a moment and sighs with emotion.*) Where have you laid him?

Narrator: They said to him,

Mary and the Jews: Lord, come and see. (*They take Jesus to the tomb.*)

Narrator: Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said,

Jew 1: See how Jesus loved him!

Narrator: But some of them said,

Jew 2: Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?

Narrator: Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said,

Jesus: Take away the stone.

Narrator: Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him,

Martha: Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.

Narrator: Jesus said to her,

Jesus: Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?

Narrator: So they took away the stone. (*The disciples and Jews roll away the stone.*) And Jesus looked upwards and said,

Jesus: (*He looks toward the sky.*) Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.

Narrator: When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice,

Jesus: (*He yells.*) Lazarus, come out!

Narrator: (*Lazarus walks out bandaged.*) The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them,

Jesus: Unbind him, and let him go. (*The Jews remove the wrappings and Lazarus is free. He raises his hands and spins around with joy.*)

Lazarus: I'm alive! I'm alive!

(*Mary and Martha embrace.*)

All: To God be the glory!

Luke 19: 1-10
Jesus and Zacchaeus
(Session 6)

Characters

Narrator	Jesus	Zacchaeus	Crowd member 1
Crowd member 2	Crowd member 3		

Narrator 1: He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature.

(The crowd is standing by, watching Jesus approach. Zacchaeus stands (squats) in the back of the crowd. He jumps, but cannot see Jesus.)

Zacchaeus: Here comes Jesus! *(Jumping)* But I can't see him. *(Jumps)* I must see Jesus.

Narrator: So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way.

Narrator: When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him,

Jesus: Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.

Zacchaeus: Yes, Jesus!

Narrator 2: So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. *(Zacchaeus comes down hurriedly.)*

Zacchaeus: *(Excitedly.)* Welcome, Jesus! I am honored and delighted that you have chosen to stay at my house today. *(They walk to Zacchaeus' house and Zacchaeus shows Jesus in.)*

Narrator: All who saw it began to grumble and said,

Crowd member 1: *(Angrily)* Get a load of this!

Crowd member 2: *(Angrily)* He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.

Crowd member 3: *(Angrily)* Can you believe it?!

Narrator: Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord,

Zacchaeus: Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.

Narrator: Then Jesus said to him,

Jesus: Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.

APPENDIX D
TALKING POINTS

Talking Points**(Session One)**

Read the passage in the Bible first without actual dramatization.

Ask students to summarize what happened in the passage.

Act out the passage.

Again, ask students to summarize what happened in the passage.

Explain the word “parable” to the students.

Discuss the possible feelings the manager may have experienced.

Ask the students to name the dishonest behavior(s) and to identify the person who committed them.

Jesus said that the manager acted shrewdly. Ask what “shrewdly” means. (craftily, sensibly)

Ask students if Jesus was rewarding the dishonest behavior.

Ask students to tell what the lesson was that Jesus was teaching.

Ask students if they know of any situations today in society or otherwise, in which someone has lost his/her job because of dishonesty.

Ask the students to tell how this situation relates to them today.

Ask the students to name situations they might find themselves in that may tempt them toward dishonesty.

Discuss their handling of the situations they named. Make sure they keep in mind what Jesus says about dishonesty.

Do a recap of the lesson, and allow the students to state what they have learned.

Talking Points**(Session Two)**

1. Ask the students to summarize the passage.
2. Explain that the passage is an allegory (an expression of one thing in the image of another), and that its meaning is vividly clear.
3. Explain that the Jewish leaders said they would obey God and then did not. The tax collectors and prostitutes professed to go their own way, but instead went God's way. (Read vv. 31-32)
4. Explain that this passage presents two sets of people; these people are not perfect and none is better than the other. While both sets are unsatisfactory, the set who obeyed God winds up as the better of the two.
5. Talk about the ideal son in this story. What would he look like? (Accepting his father's instructions and carrying them through.)
6. Explain that main message in this passage is that the really good person is the person in whom his walk matches his talk.
7. Add that the passage teaches us that promises and fine words will never take the place of fine performance and works.
8. Emphasize that the mark of a true Christian is obedience willfully given.

Talking Points**(Session Three)**

Read the passage aloud from the Bible.

Ask the students to summarize what happened.

Dramatize the passage.

Ask the students again to summarize what happened.

Explain that Jews and Samaritans had no dealings with one another. In this group of lepers, there was at least one Samaritan.

Explain that this fact represents the notion that a misfortune common to all of us (illness) permeates barriers between races and nationalities. The lepers had ignored or even forgotten that they were Jews and Samaritans, but merely sick people in need. The need which they all shared was the need for God.

Explain that it was a general rule for lepers to remain at least fifty yards away from healthy people. Ask students to discuss illnesses today that may make people feel isolated.

Ask what Jesus' question was to the single leper and what his concern was.

Ask the students to describe the other nine lepers with one word. (Ungrateful)

Have the students discuss what it means to be ungrateful. (Without expression of thanks or appreciation)

Ask students to discuss times when they were ungrateful. (To God, our parents, and others) Ask the students to name a time when someone did something for them that meant a lot to them. Did they thank them?

Ask the students if anyone had ever been ungrateful to them. How did they feel? Ask how they think Jesus felt after having healed the lepers and only one thought well enough of him to thank him. Is it sort of disrespectful? How do they think God feels when we do

not acknowledge God? Explain that God is not pleased. God is constantly blessing us; and all God wants is for us to constantly praise and worship God.

Define prostrate (lying face down as in submission or adoration). This is how the leper approached Jesus. What does this say about how the leper feels toward Jesus? Suggest that sometimes when they pray, they ought to lie prostrate and just worship God. Explain that God is so pleased when we honor God in this way because it shows how much we adore God.

Talking Points**(Session Four)**

Ask the students to summarize what happened.

Talk about where Jesus was teaching in this passage. Point out that church can take place anywhere, and that it does not have to be in the synagogue. The word must, as did Jesus, go wherever people will listen.

Talk about Lake Genneserrat and the fishes. Jesus merely saw where the fish were and guided the men. Yes, it looked like a miracle; but the point is that Jesus had a keen eye and he directed the men according to his keen eye. We need someone with a keen eye to lead the people to God.

Talk about the spirit of the will. One must be willing to make an effort in order to get something done. Jesus said it and Peter did it, even though Peter was tired from doing so. We must be willing to go on, even when disaster strikes. We must not be so quick to give up hope.

Talk about not only do we need a spirit to make an effort, but we also need a spirit to try what seem impossible or hopeless. Even though many factors pointed to the notion that there were no fish in the lake, Peter was willing to give it one more try. That is what we, as Christians, must do.

Talk about “catching people” and what that means.

Ask students if this scripture applies to them in any way.

Talking Points
(Session Five)

Ask youth to tell who this Mary was.

Ask youth if they know of another Mary.

Ask how was Lazarus described or identified?

How was Jesus viewed in Judea? How did the people feel about him?

This is a story about Lazarus' death and resurrection. As what did Jesus name as the purpose of this story.

State that we have heard Thomas described as a doubter. Ask how is Thomas portrayed in this scripture and how did they know.

State that this is a story about the importance of faith, even in the midst of doubt and hopelessness.

Ask the student to compare and contrast the words and actions of Martha.

Tell the students that often our declarations do not match up with our true beliefs, as in Martha's story.

State that in one's humanness, sometimes one's theological declarations do not match one's true beliefs; but if we just hold on, we will see God's glory.

Talking Points**(Session 6)**

Ask the students what happened in the story. Have them recall the story.

Jericho was a very wealthy town. Tax collectors got rich quickly, and were hated by everyone because they added their own charges to the taxes of the people unfairly.

Ask why Zacchaeus would want to see Jesus so badly. Point out that Zacchaeus took a great risk to try to see Jesus.

Point out that it is not our place to judge others as we believe God sees them. Our ways are not God's ways.

What happened when Jesus was in Zacchaeus' house? We call what happened to Zacchaeus a transformation. Ask the students if they have ever experienced a transformation. Talk about it.

Talk about the fact that when you are transformed, the things that were once important to you are no longer important. Ask what Zacchaeus did that supports this fact.

APPENDIX E
CRITIQUE/ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

**Critique/Analysis Questions
(Session One)**

Was it clear through the portrayal of this scripture that Jesus was speaking? Should it be written as a monologue?

What questions did you raise when viewing this presentation?

Could anything else have been done to clarify any questions that may arise after viewing this dramatization?

Was anything else necessary to make a better connection to the sermon?

What would you change?

**Critique/Analysis Questions
(Session Two)**

What questions/concerns do you have about the presentation?

Was it clear through the portrayal of this Scripture that Jesus was speaking? Should it be written as a monologue?

What questions did you raise when viewing this presentation?

Was anything else necessary to make a better connection to the sermon?

What topics would you discuss if you were teaching this lesson?

What suggestions do you have for improvement?

**Critique/Analysis Questions
(Session three)**

Was the music helpful in setting the tone? Was it a distraction?

What could we add/delete to make the presentation more effective?

Is it okay to do the story with fewer lepers or does it take away from the story?

Based on the scripture, what questions would you ask if you were teaching this lesson?

What things would you discuss?

If you noticed, we did not announce the presentation today. I wanted it to go along with the flow of service. I told the students to enter and exit without expecting applause. Did this have any effect on the performance?

**Critique/Analysis Questions
(Session 4)**

Was the music helpful in setting the tone? Was it a distraction?

What could we add/delete to make the presentation more effective?

How practical is it to have a microphone for each character with a speaking part?

Based on the scripture, what questions would you ask if you were teaching this lesson?

What things would you discuss?

**Critique/Analysis Questions
(Session Five)**

Does anyone have any concerns about this presentation?

Was the presentation clear?

What topics would you discuss if you were teaching this lesson?

How was the music this week? Was it effective?

What, if any, changes would you make to this presentation?

**Critique/Analysis Questions
(Session Six)**

What issues, questions, or concerns do you have?

Was this week's music this effective?

How could this presentation be improved?

What issues would you raise if you were teaching this lesson?

APPENDIX F
JOURNAL QUESTIONS FOR EACH SESSION

Journal Questions (Session One)

(Adults and Youth)

1. Today's scripture was
2. Today's focal scripture was about...
3. The focal scripture applies to me because, in that, by...
4. The most important notion, idea, or lesson I gained from this passage is...

(Children Youth)

5. What I learned new from this passage was...
6. Acting out this passage helps me to ...
7. I like to get the big roles with a lot of lines because...
8. I like the small parts because...
9. I am (nervous, excited, scared, proud, confident) when I perform before the big church because...
10. This scripture would be (hard, easy) for me to understand if it had not been acted out.
11. I will most likely (remember/forget) this scripture because...
12. I consider myself a minister in this church.
13. This drama ministry is important because...
14. I take my roles seriously because...

(Adults Only)

15. Today's dramatization could have been improved by...
16. Today's scripture fit the Pastor's message because...
17. How do you feel about having drama in worship?

**Journal Questions
(Session Two)**

Adults and Youth

Today's Scripture was...

Today's Scripture was about...

What does this Scripture mean today?

Does this Scripture apply to you and your life? If so, how?

The most important lesson I learned from today's Scripture was...

Youth Only

When I acted out this Scripture, I...

This week, I liked/disliked the performance...

Studying this Scripture this morning during rehearsal did/did not help me to understand the sermon better because...

Answer as Applicable

My attitude toward incorporating drama in worship has changed in this way... I now feel/believe...

One way to improve this dramatic presentation is to...

Journal Questions (Session Three)

(Adults and Youth)

Today's Scripture was...

Today's Scripture was about...

The point that stuck out most about the Scripture was...

This Scripture does/does not apply to me because...

I liked/disliked this performance because...

(Youth)

Discussing this passage during rehearsal is/is not important because...

Dramatizing this Scripture helped/did not me to understand the Pastor's message better because...

I know now how to make this Scripture apply to my life. I know that I must...

I believe that we could improve this presentation by...

I still have a question about our Scripture/lesson for today. It is...

(Adults)

This dramatization did/did not align with Pastor's message because...

This presentation could be improved by...

The volume of the students was...

Three questions or discussion topics I would write about this passage of Scripture are...

**Journal Questions
(Session 4)**

Adults and Youth

Please comment fully on the absence of the project last week.

Did you miss it?

Were you glad that we did not have it?

Our scripture for this week is: _____

I learned that _____.

I liked this performance because _____.

This scripture really helped me to understand the sermon because _____.

**Journal Questions
(Session Five)**

Youth and Adults

Today's scripture was taken from...

Today's scripture was about...

This scripture applied to me and my life by...

I understand this story because...

Doing this play helped me to understand this scripture because...

I will not remember this story because...

I liked this play because...

I did not like this play because...

What I gained most from this scripture was...

This scripture correlated with Pastor Ray's sermon. Some things that I understood from both places were....

Journal Questions
(Session Six)

Today's scripture was _____.

Today's scripture was about _____.

I see myself in this story because _____.

Some important things to take from this story are _____.

Seeing this scripture acted out helped me to understand the sermon better because....

This scripture reminds me of someone I know, _____, because _____.

Getting this scripture in advance and reading it in advance helped me to understand it better when we dramatized our parts because _____.

APPENDIX G
JOURNAL DATA

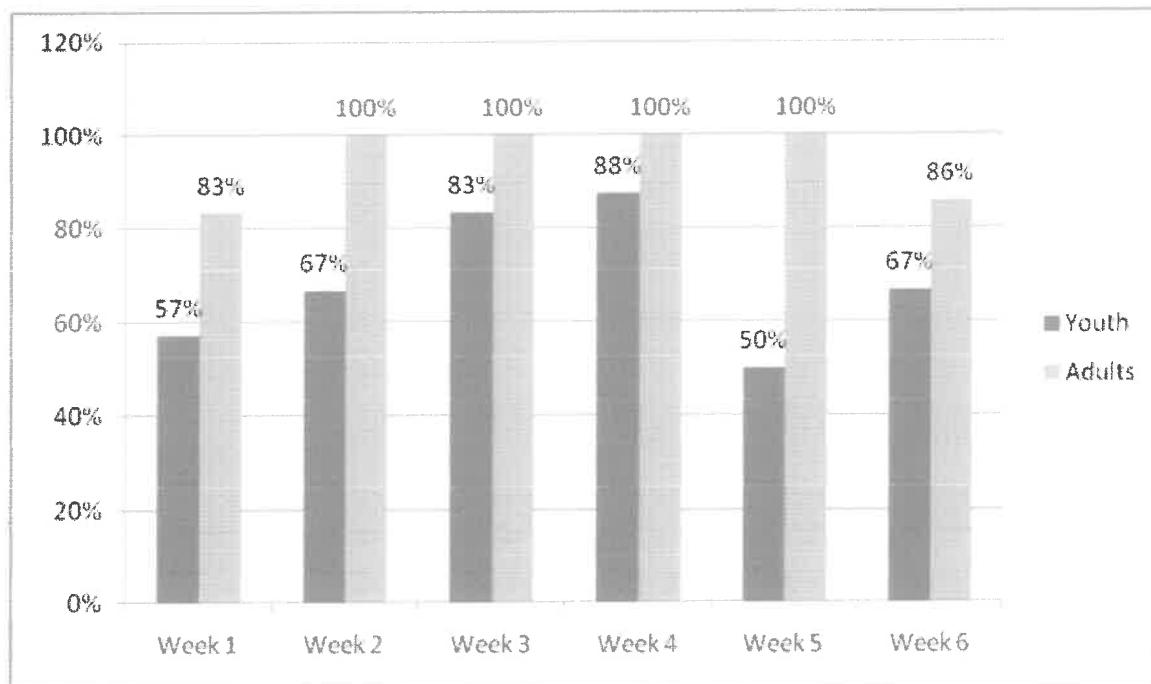


Table1: Percentage of Attendees Who Remembered the Week's Scripture

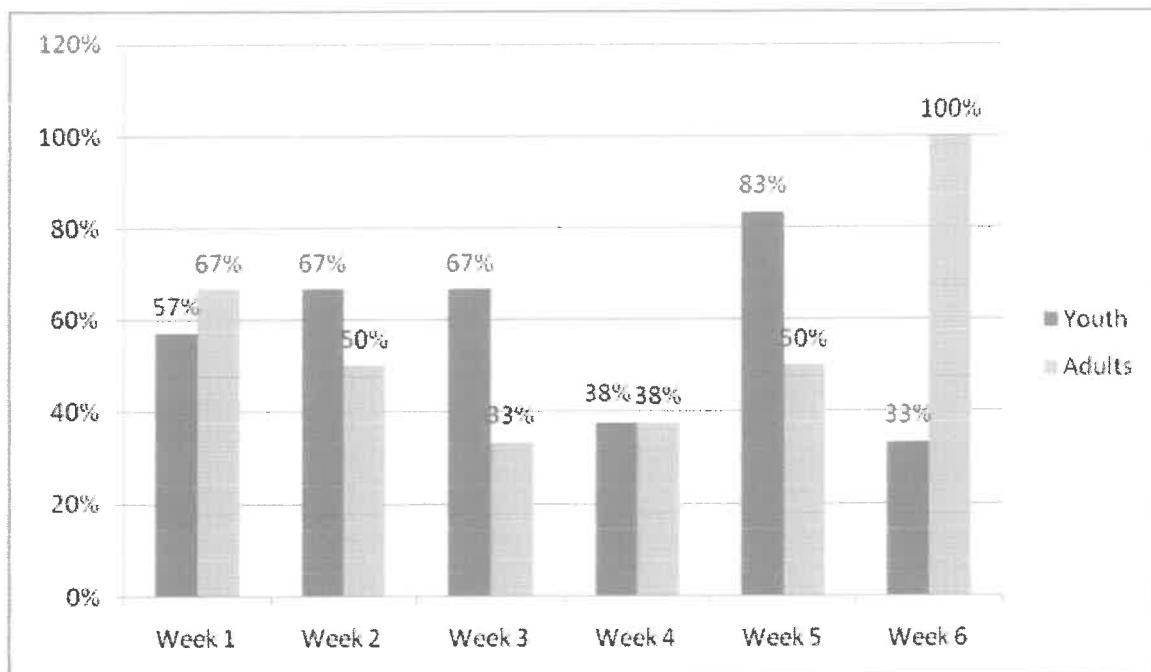


Table 2: Percentage of Attendees Who Demonstrated Understanding of the Scripture

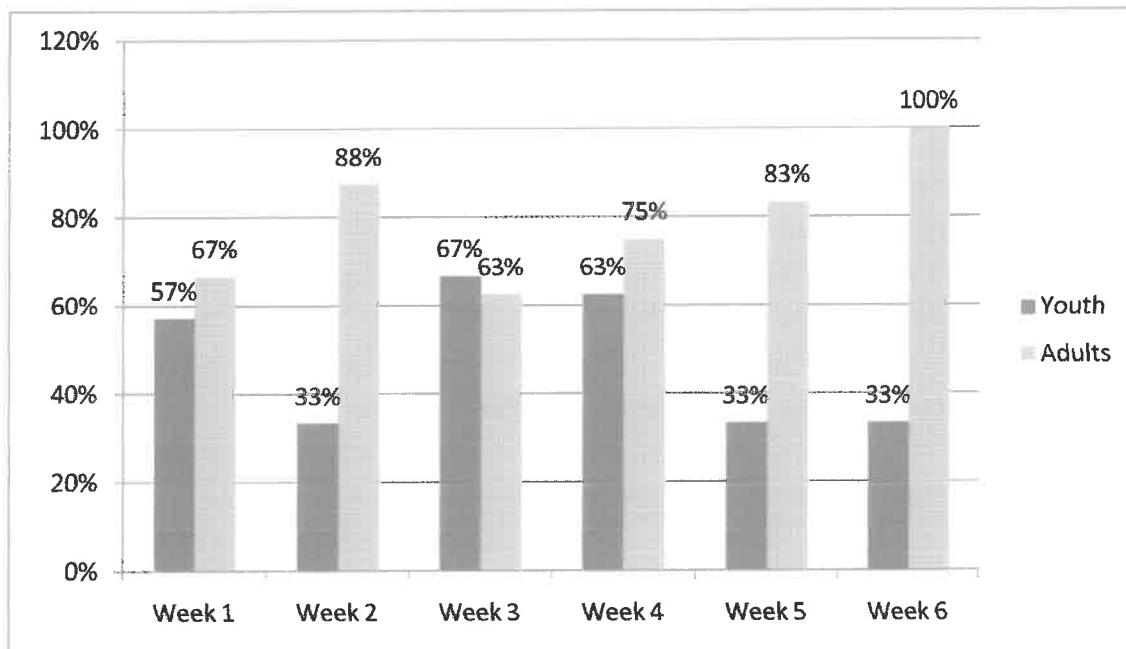


Table 3: Percentage of Attendees Who Found that the Dramatization Aided Their Understanding

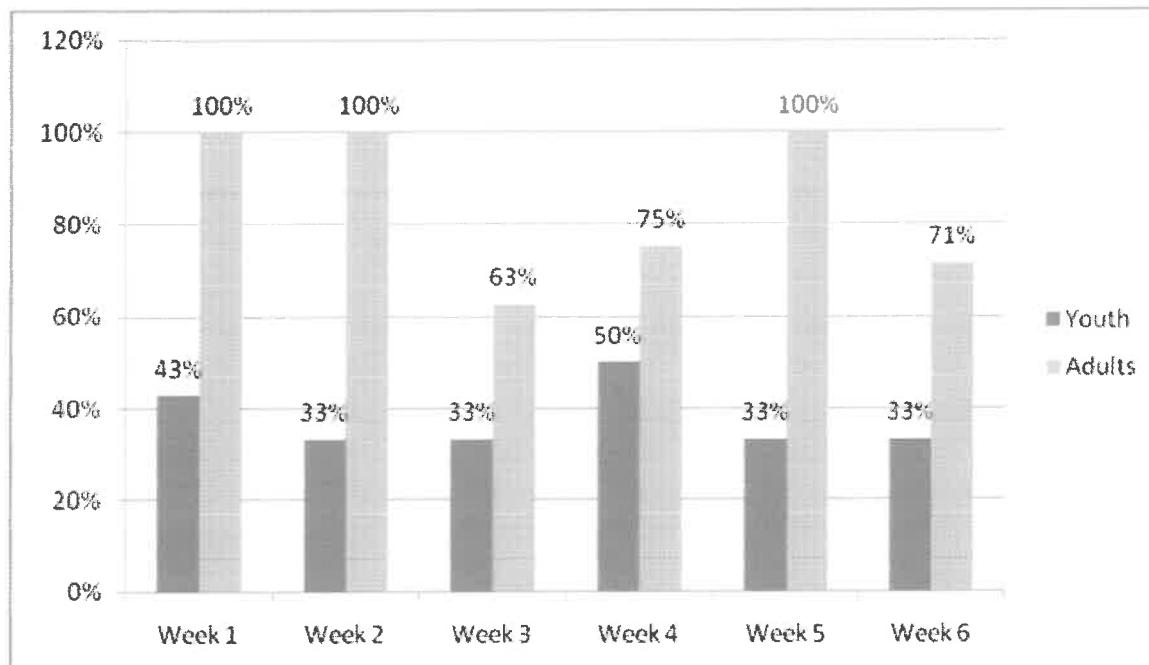


Table 4: Percentage of Attendees Who Found the Week's Scripture Applicable to Their Own Lives

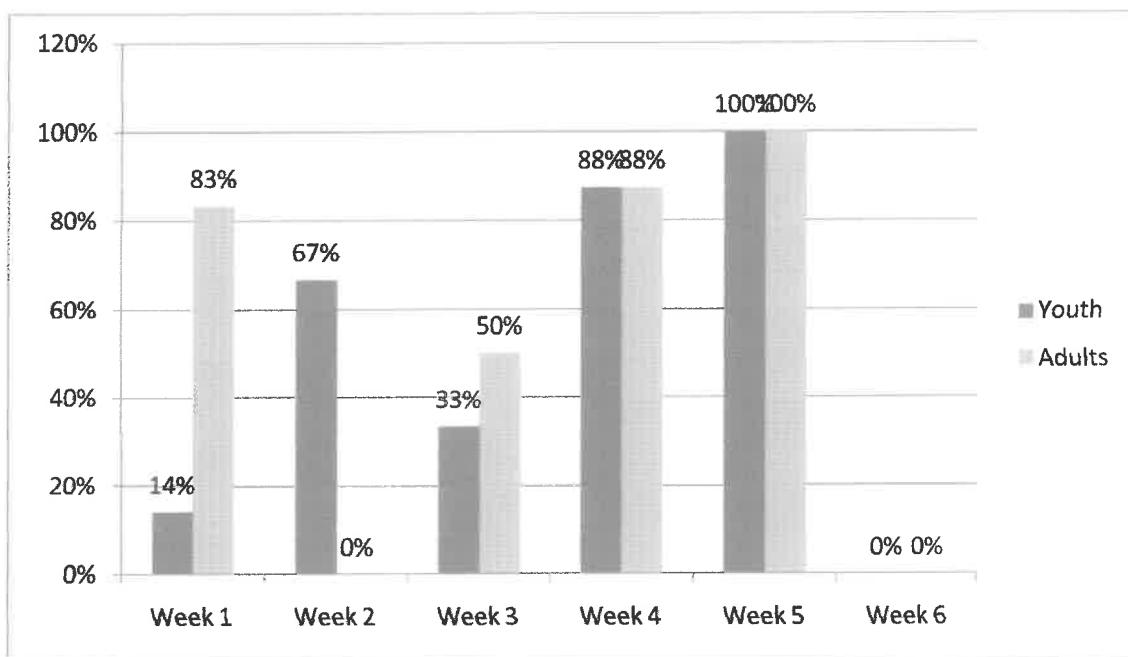
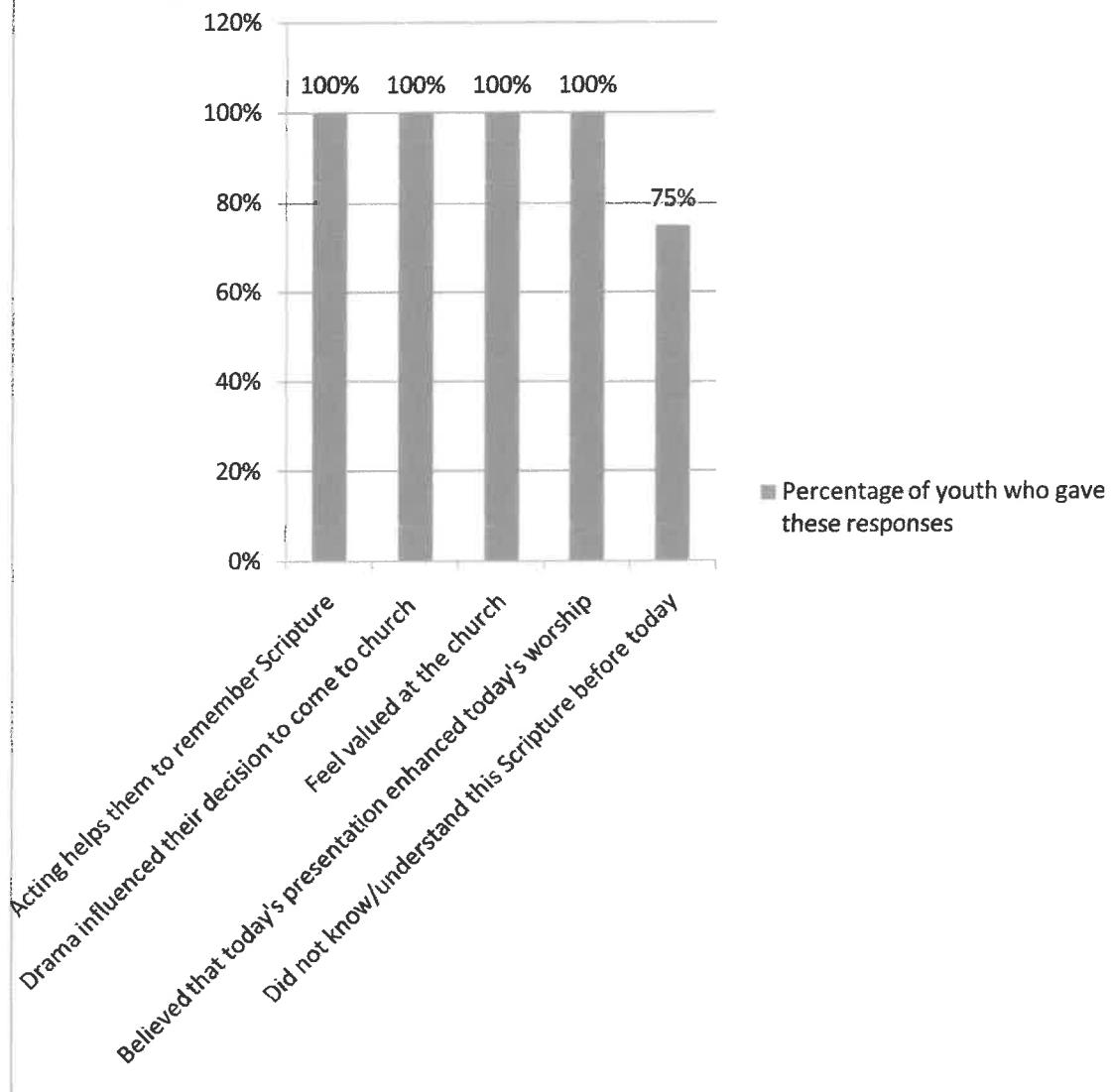


Table 5: Percentage of Attendees Who Liked the Week's Performance

APPENDIX H
YOUTH QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

Percentage of Youth Who Gave These Responses on the Youth Questionnaire on September 19, 2010



APPENDIX I
PRE AND POST SURVEY DATA

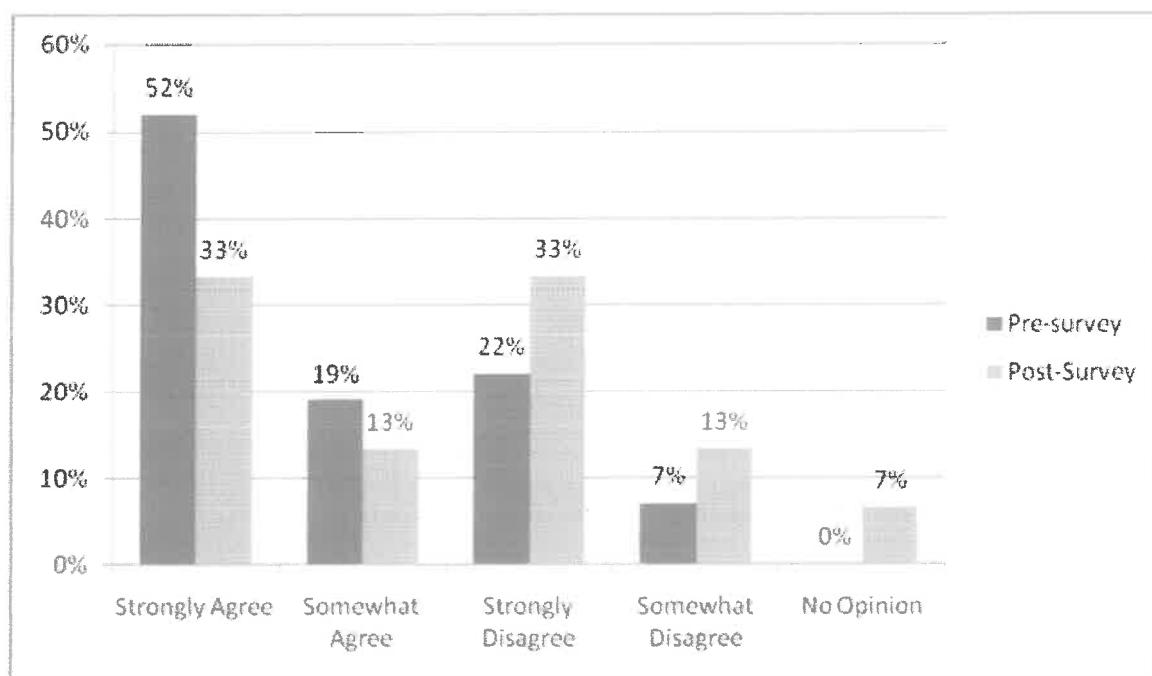
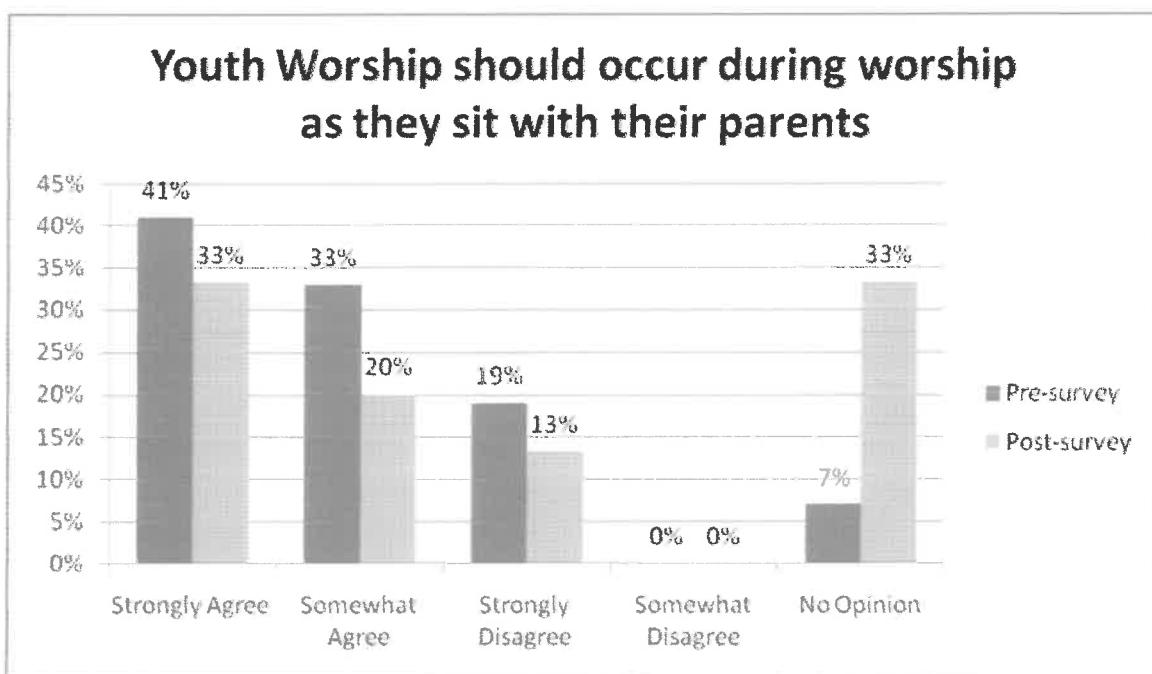
Table 7. Youth worship should occur in a separate location**Table 8.**

Table 9.

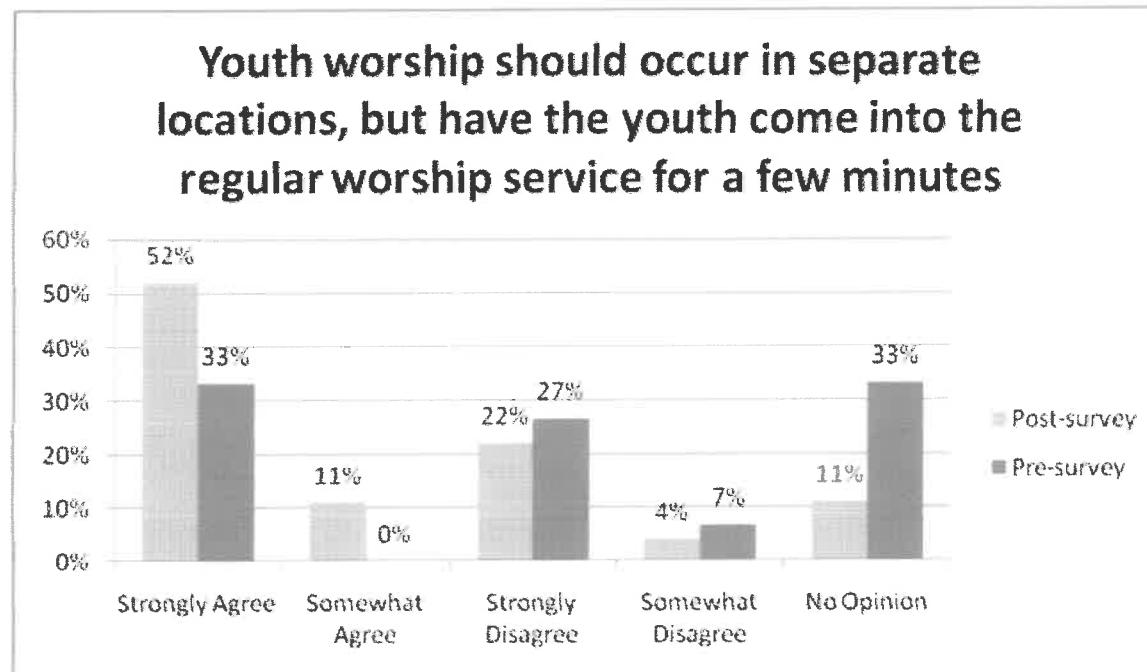


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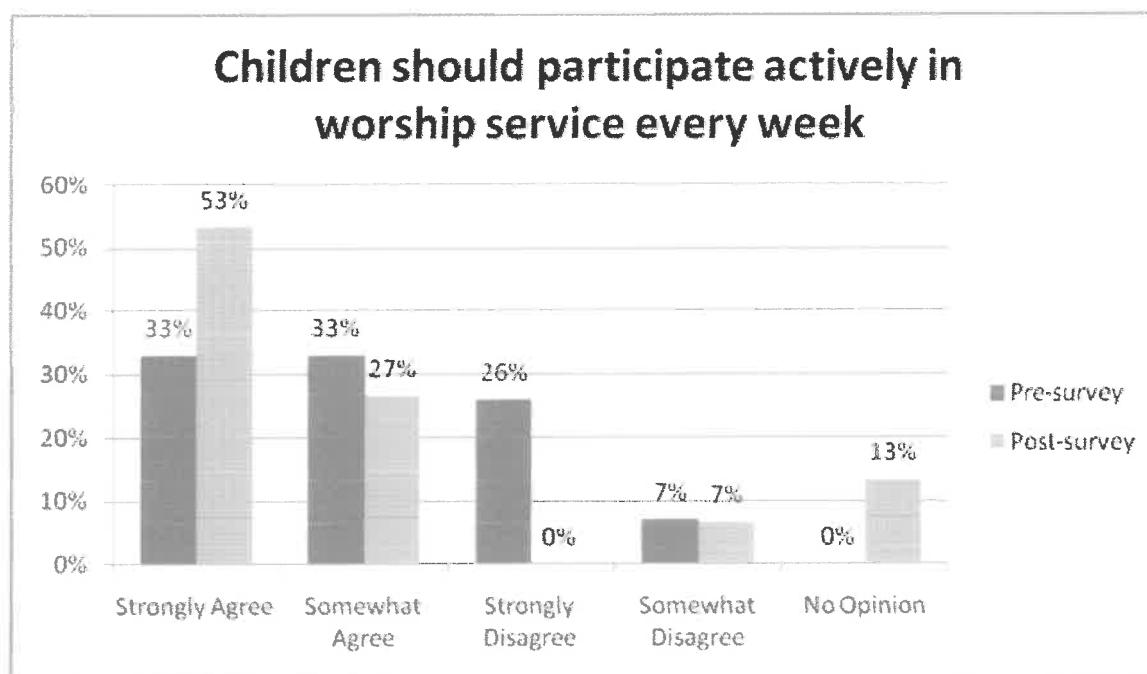


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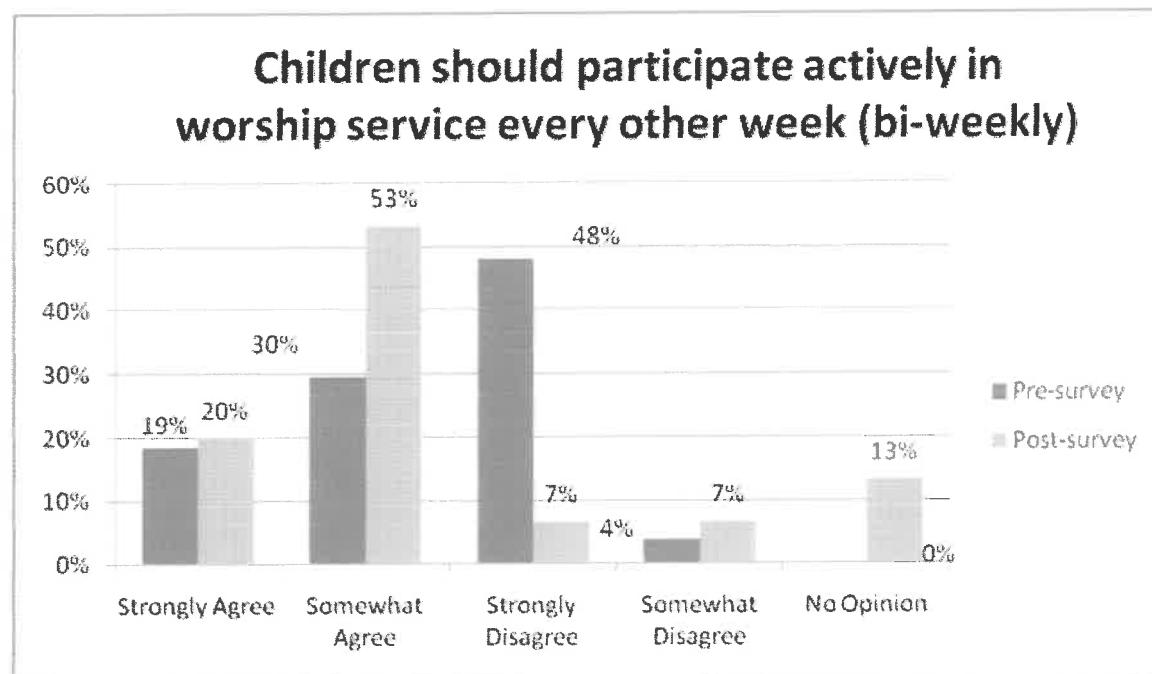


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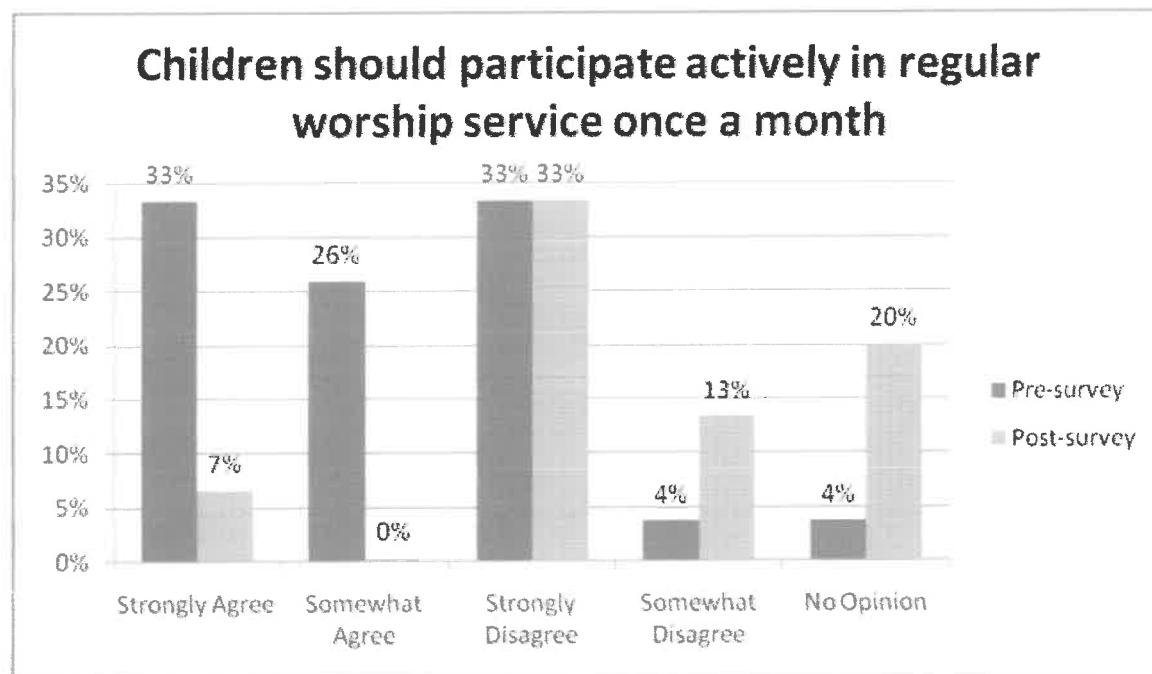


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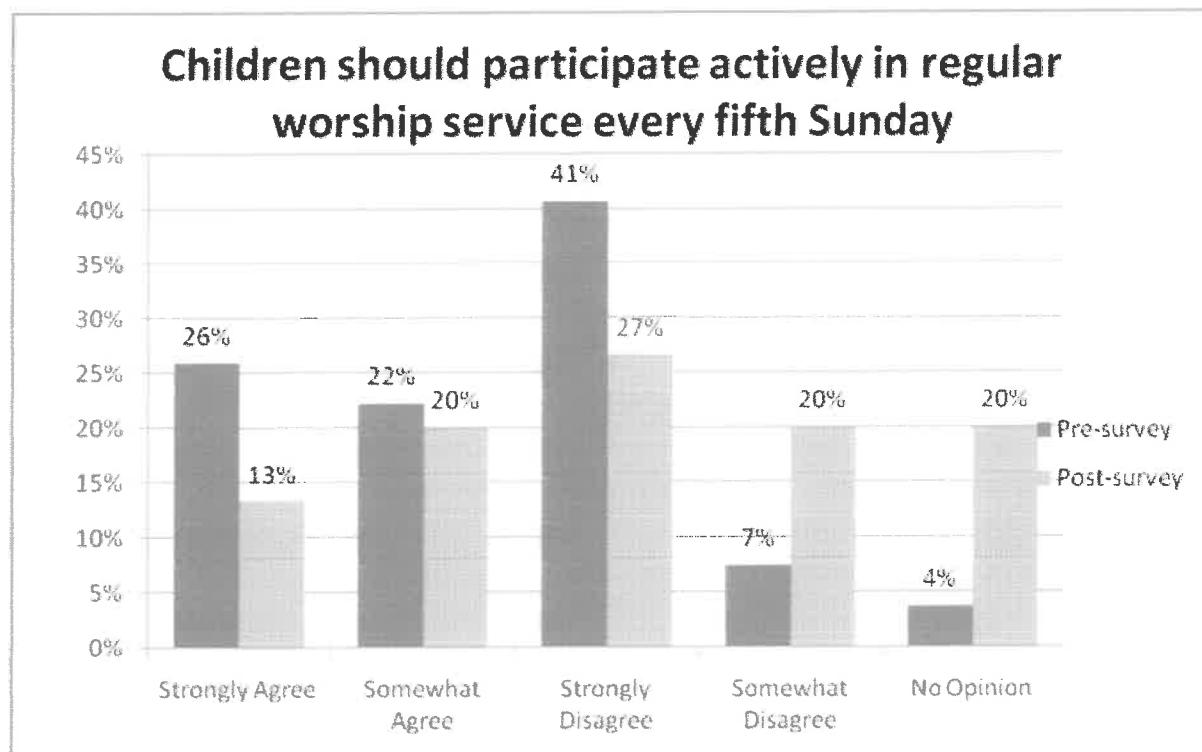


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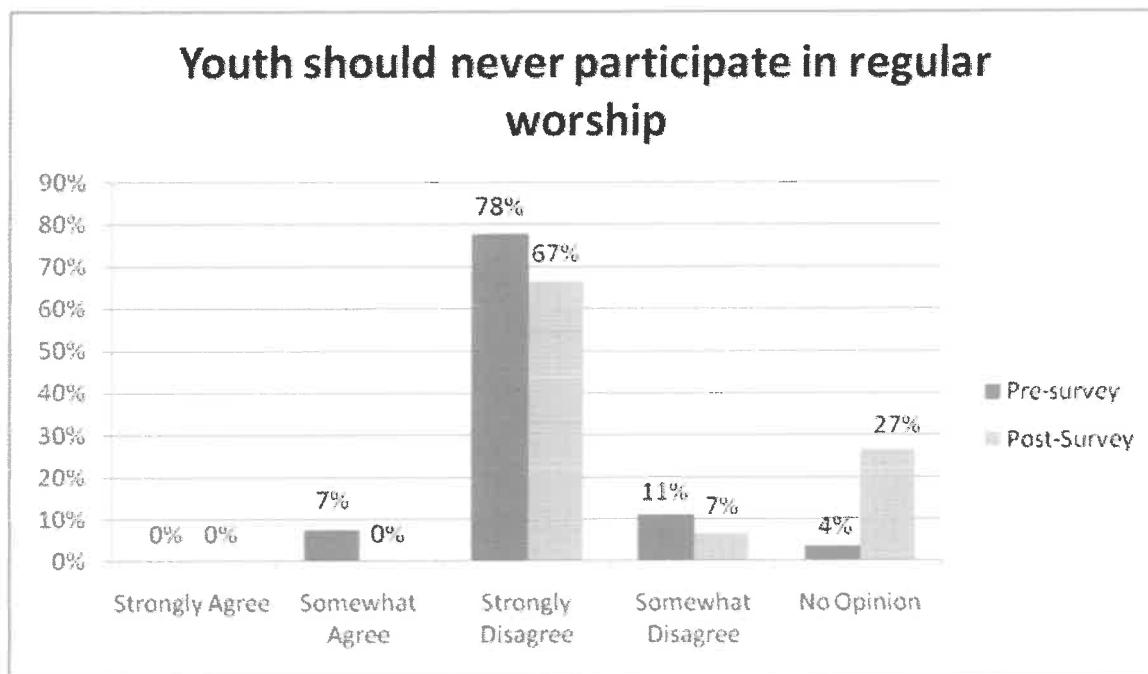


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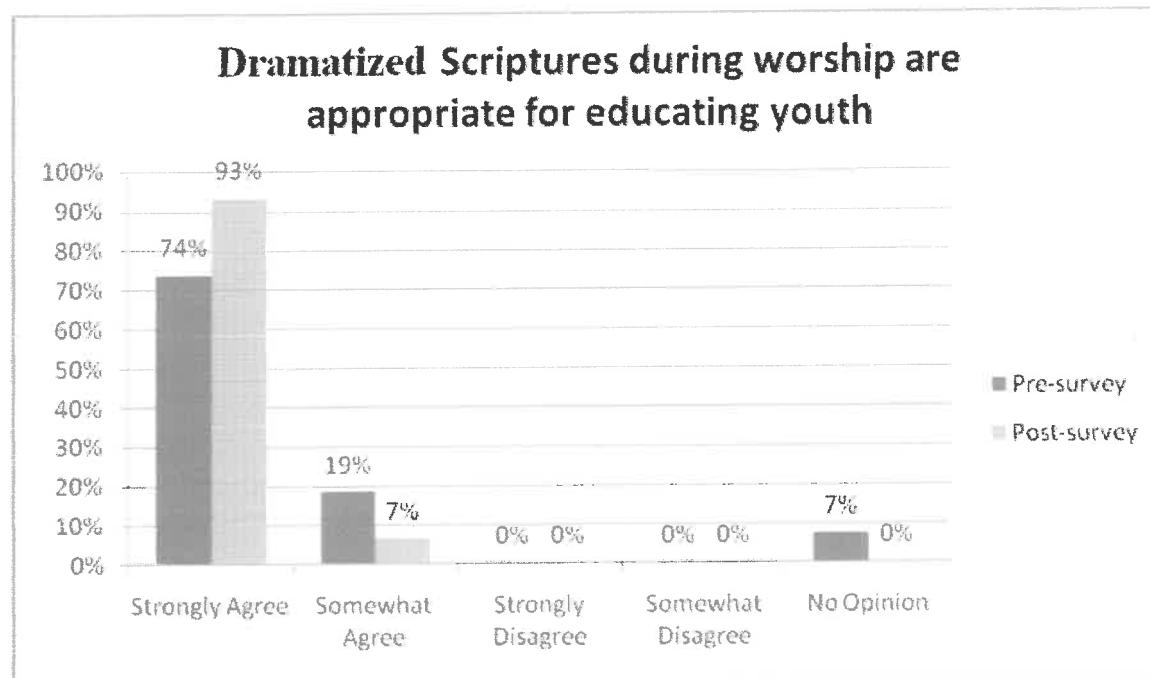


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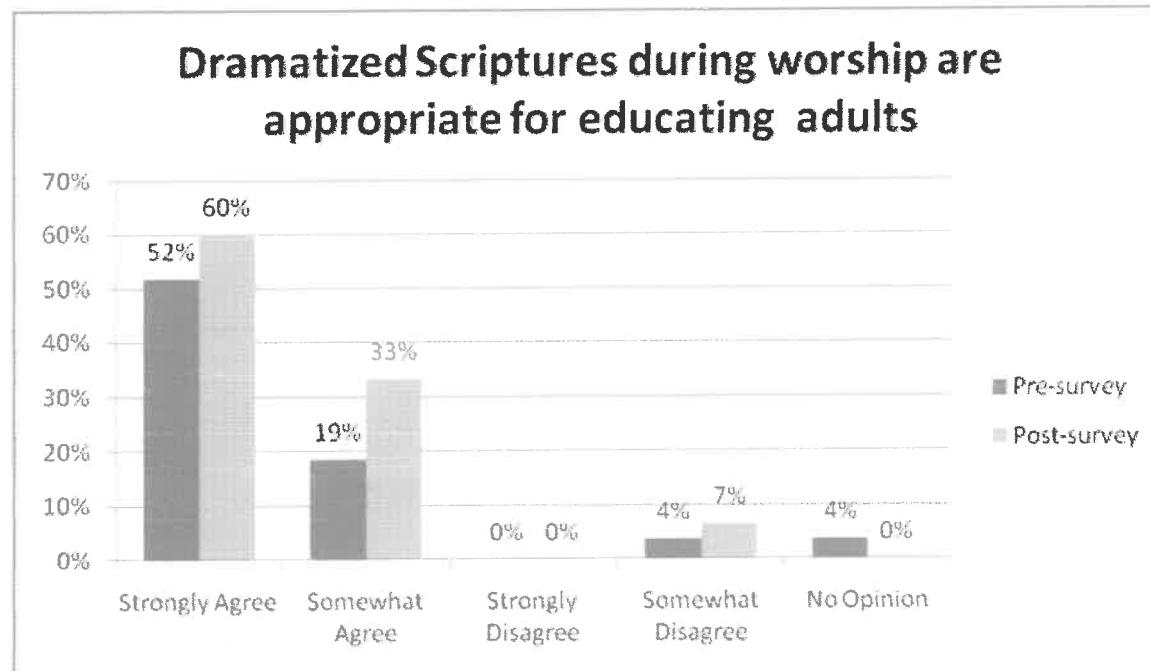


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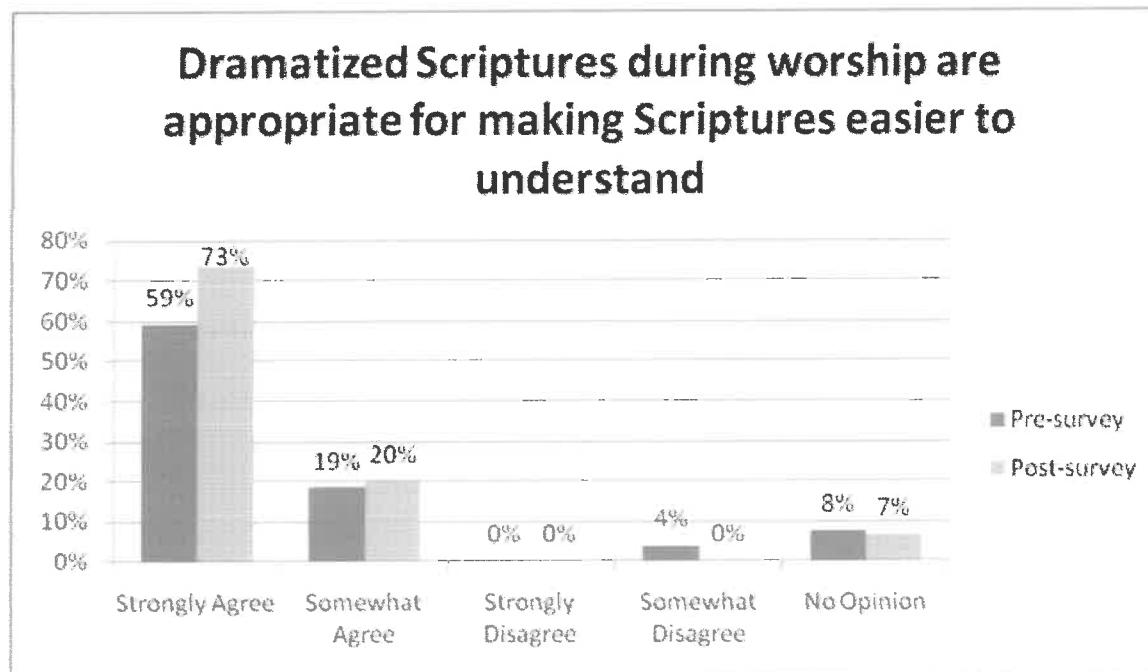


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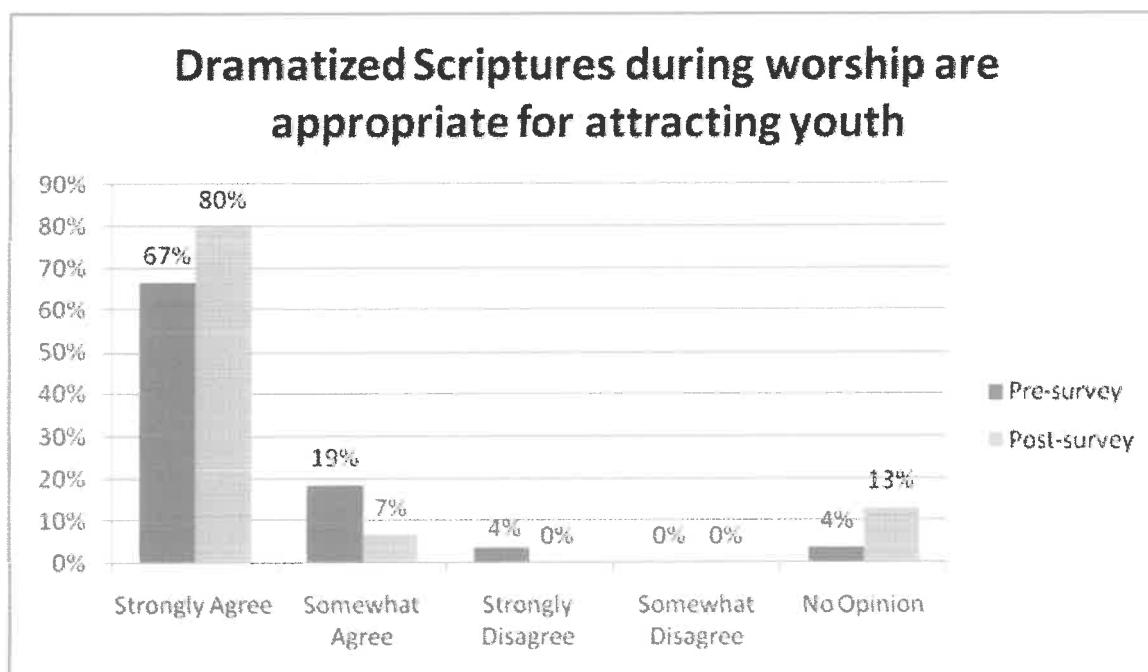


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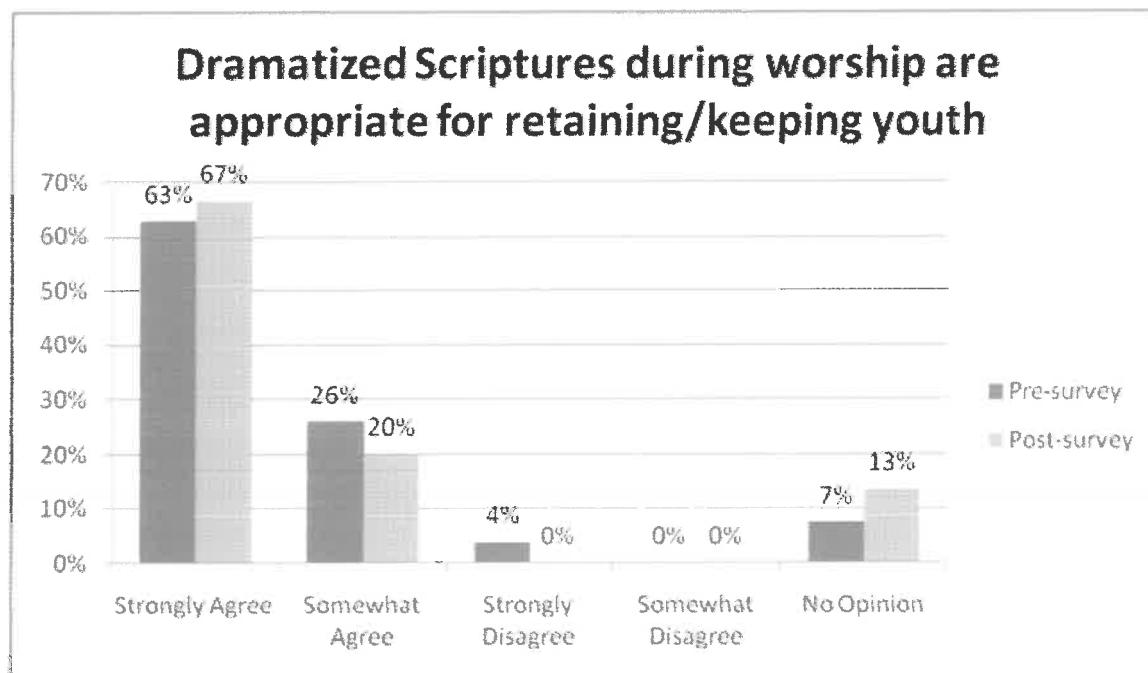


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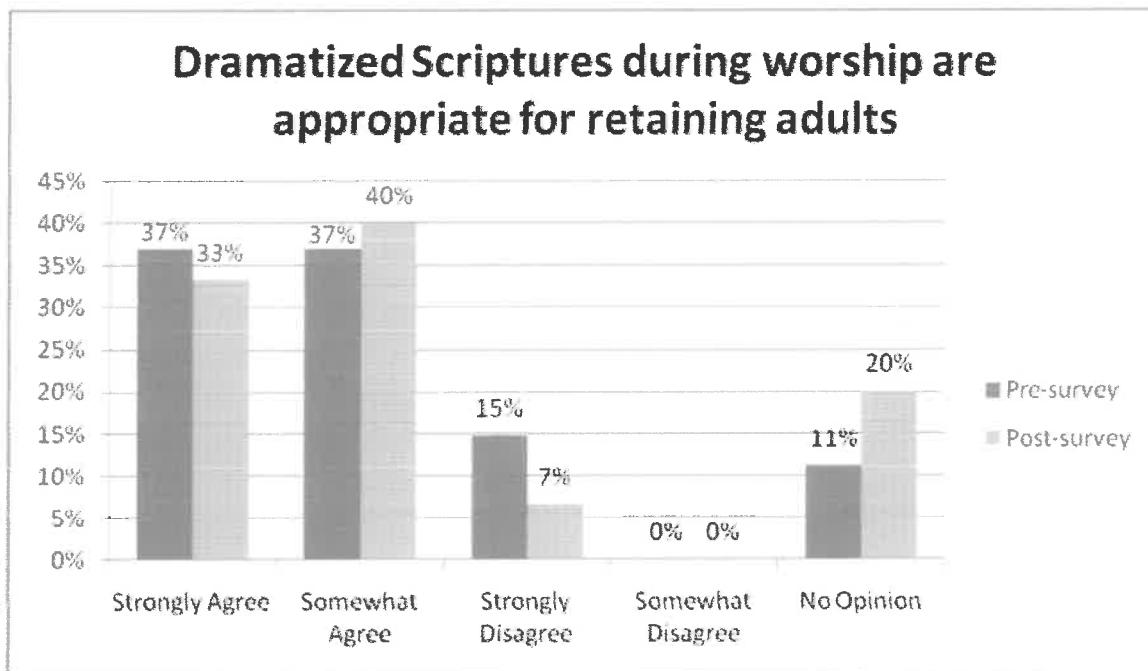


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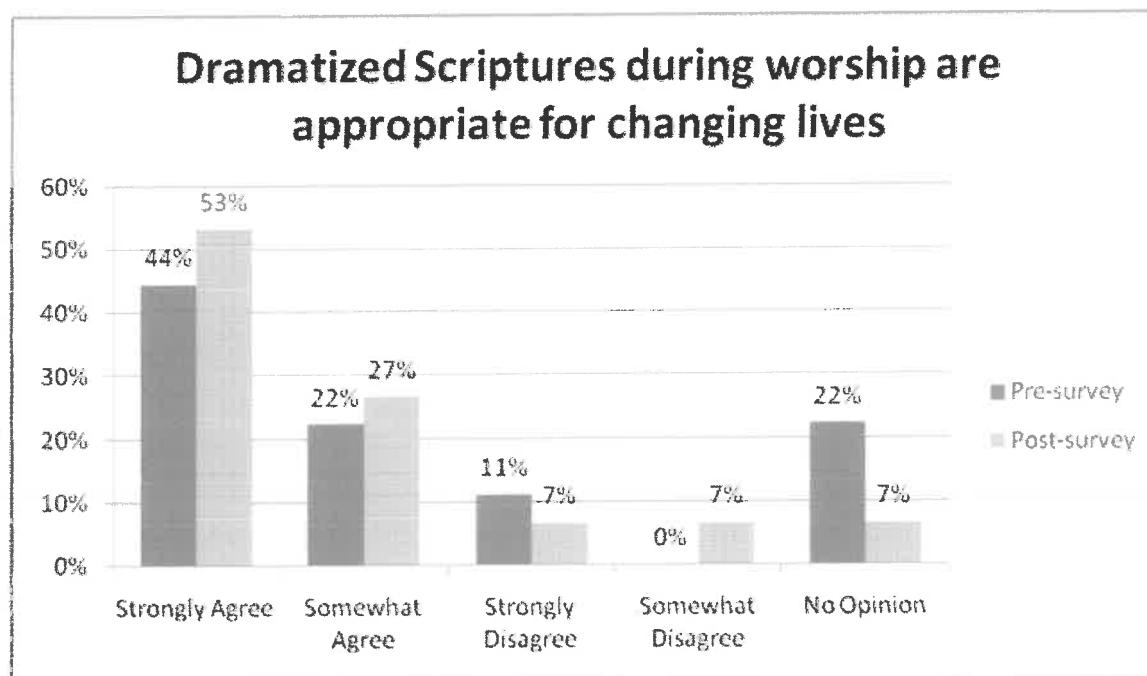


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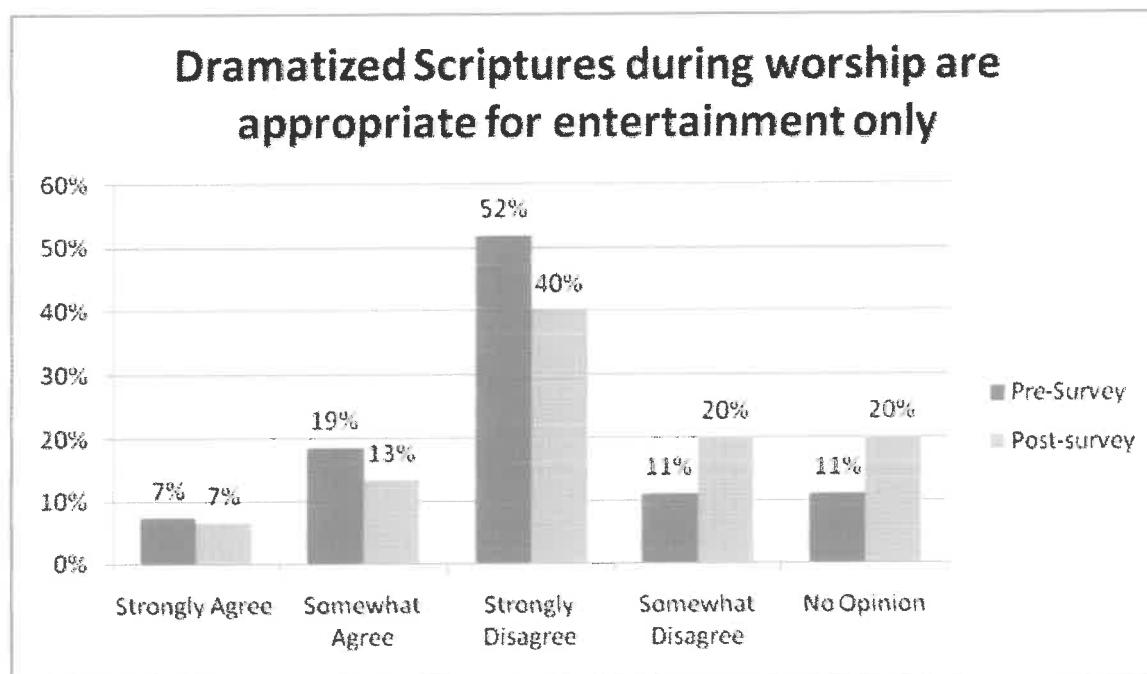


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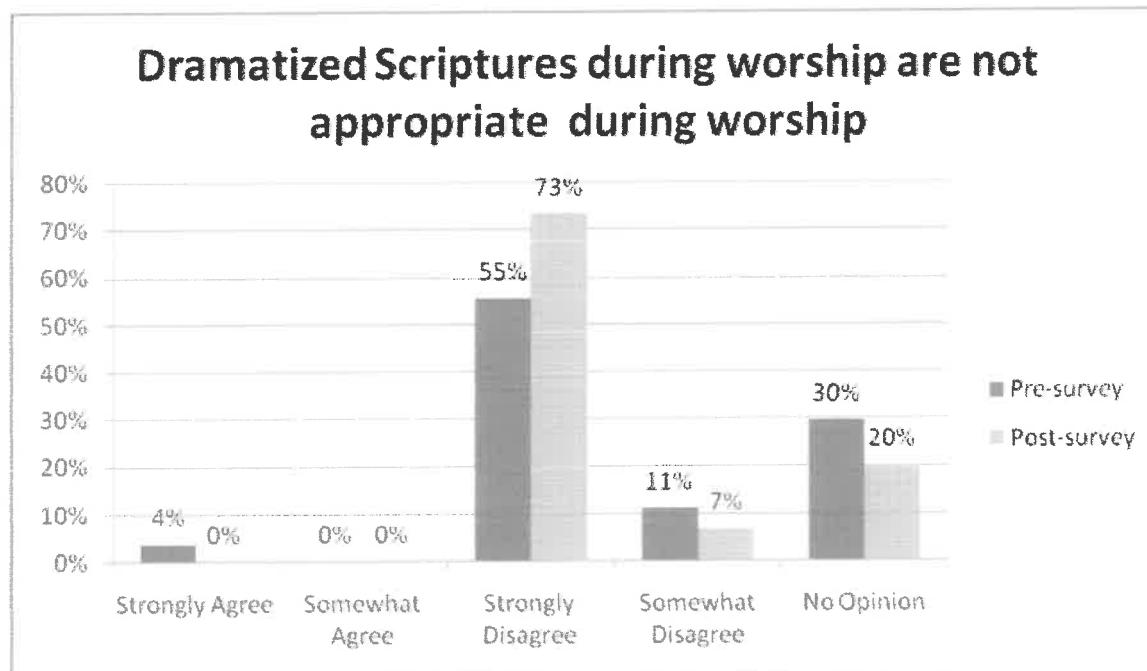


Table 24. Dramatized Presentations of the Scriptures Affect the Character Of Immanuel Bethel Positively

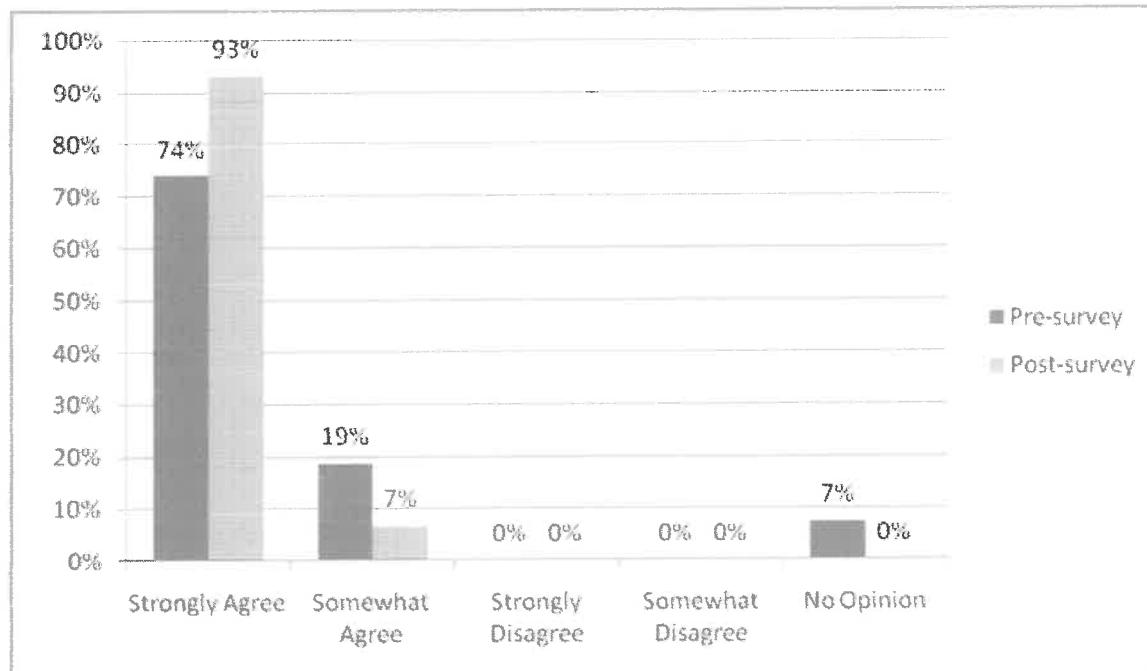


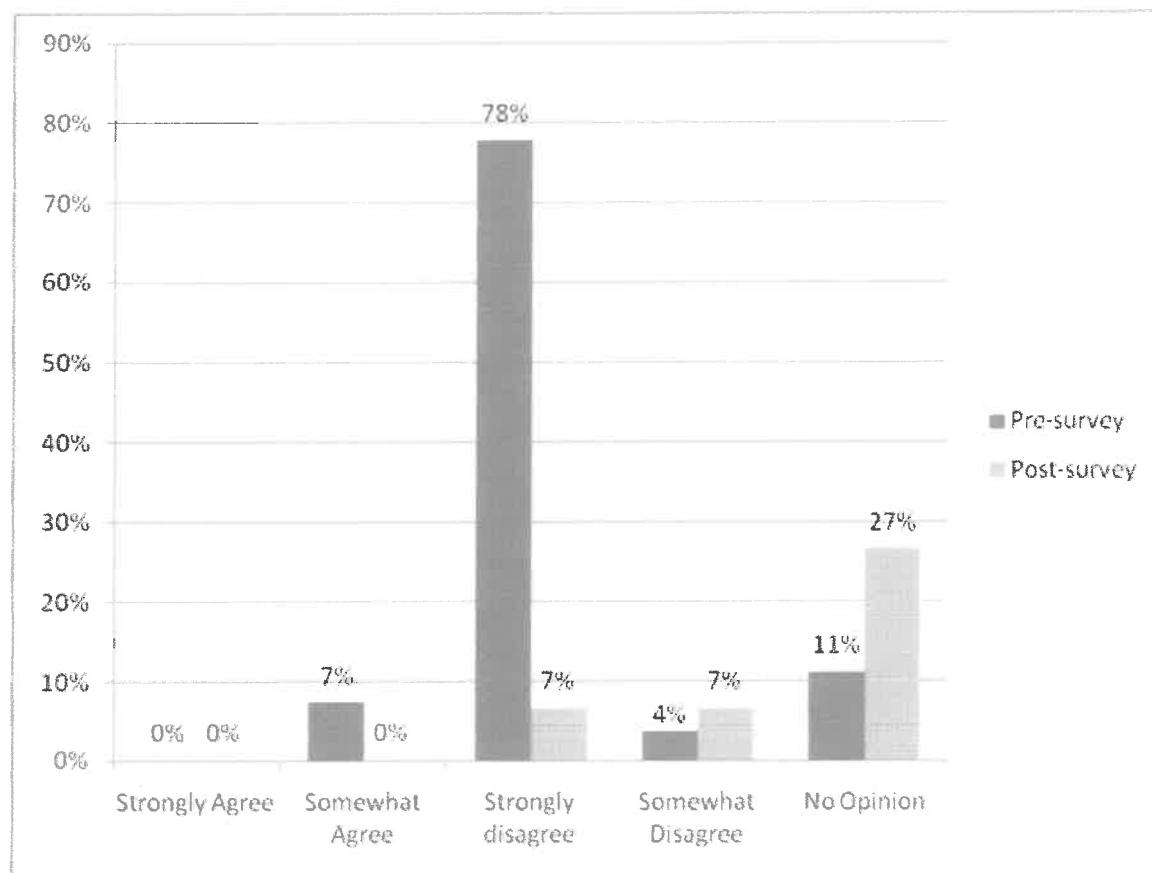
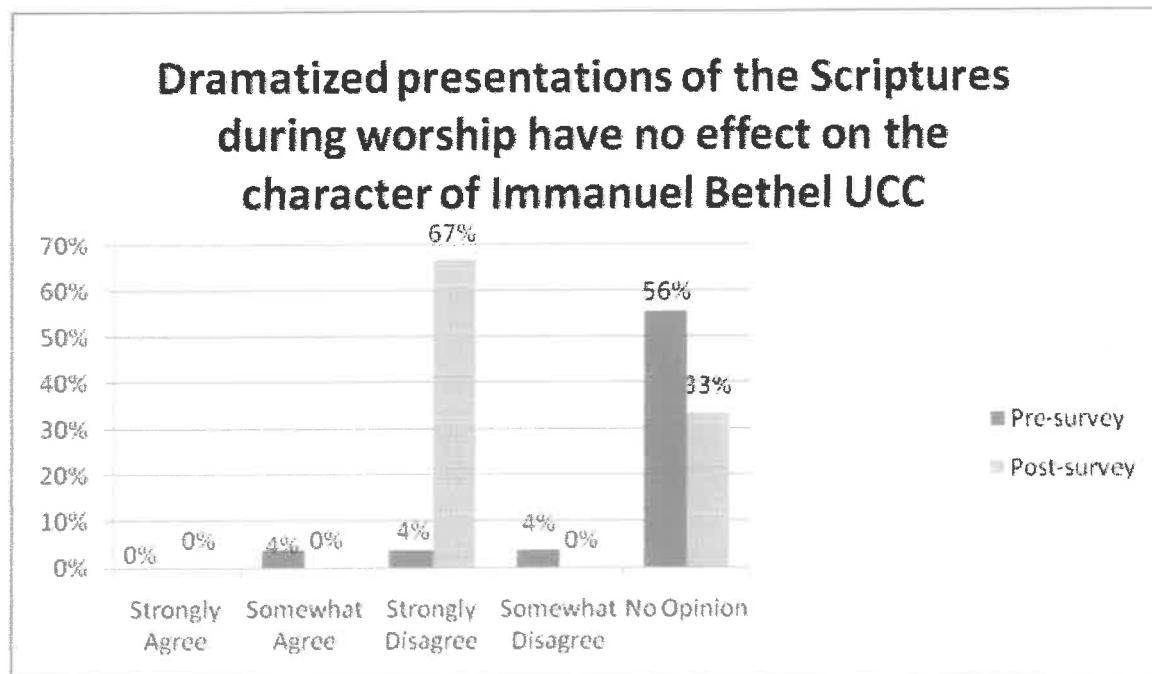
Table 25. Dramatized presentations of the Scriptures affect the character of Immanuel Bethel negatively

Table26.**Table 27. Responses to the Question about Immanuel Bethel's Character**

“Encouraging and eager to be friendly”

“Strong, upholding citizens who promote God and Christ”

“Keep it the same”

“Showing us to Believe in God”

“Active love for God”

“A church of committed believers”

“The family feeling,” “Family-like, ”” Wouldn’t like to see changes in the service

“Loving, caring family”

“How we may better serve our God, brothers and sisters, and our youth by participating in worship services”

“Our character is one more of tolerance than of total inclusion and receptiveness”

“Loving, caring, open, Godly, warm” character means the personality of the church; the character is one that is more conservative as opposed to one that is more relevant to contemporary times.”

“How we worship”

APPENDIX J
SAME PERSONS DATA

Table 28.

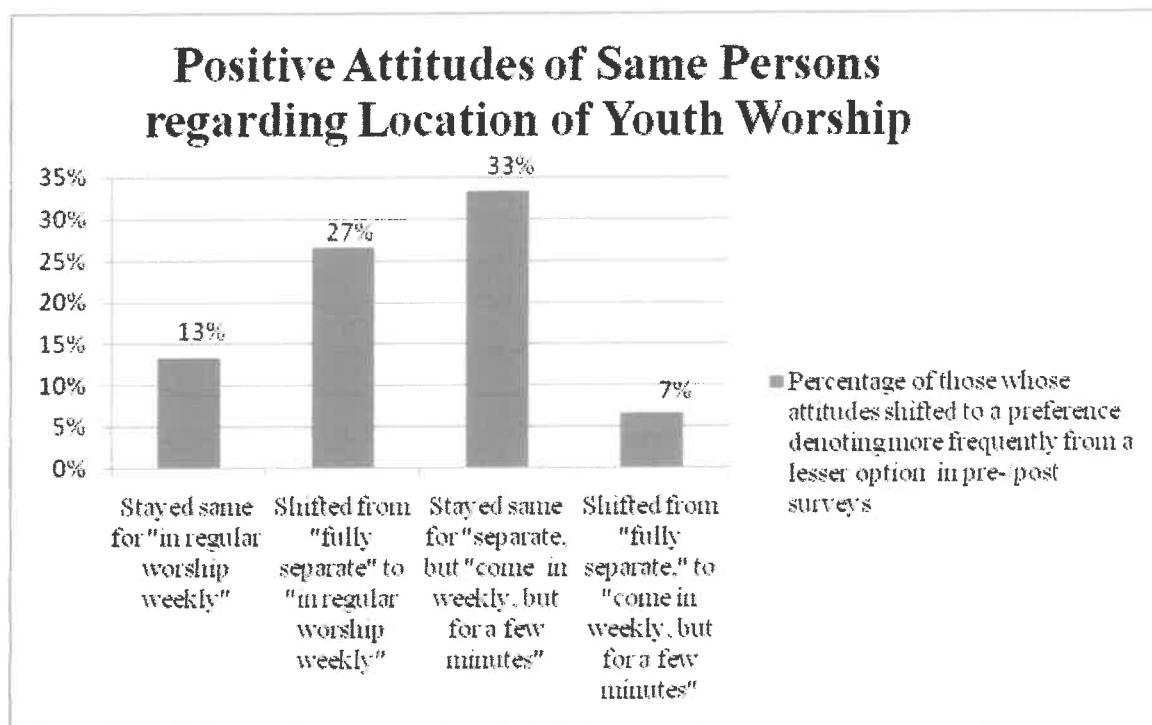


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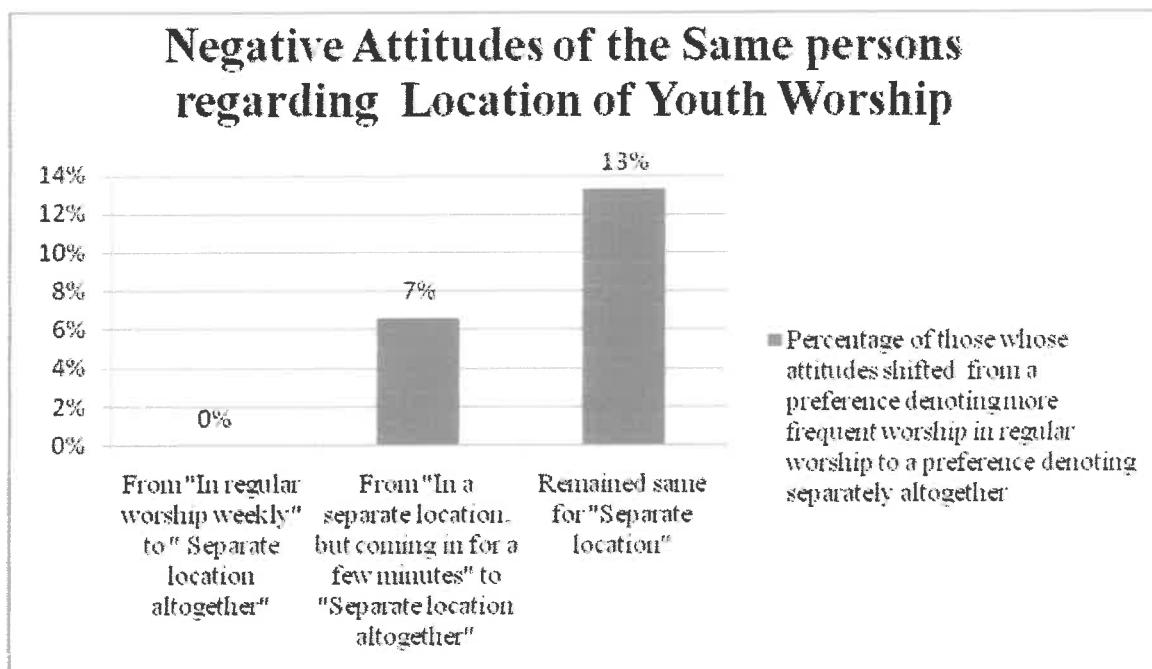


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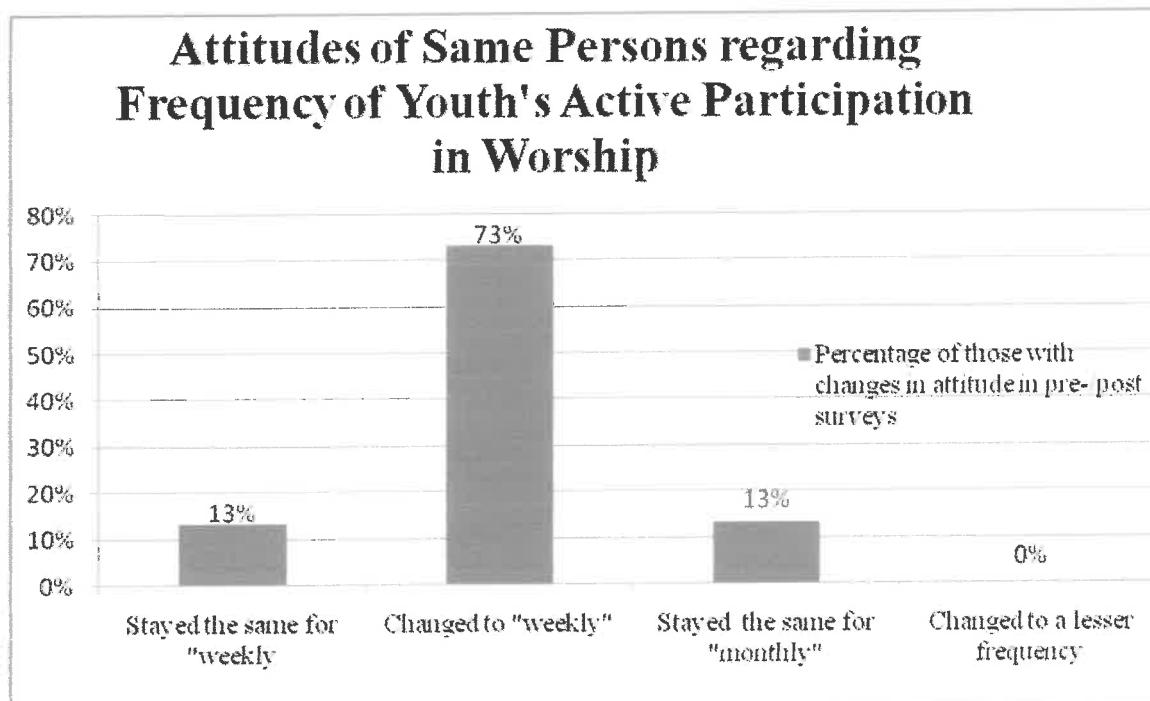


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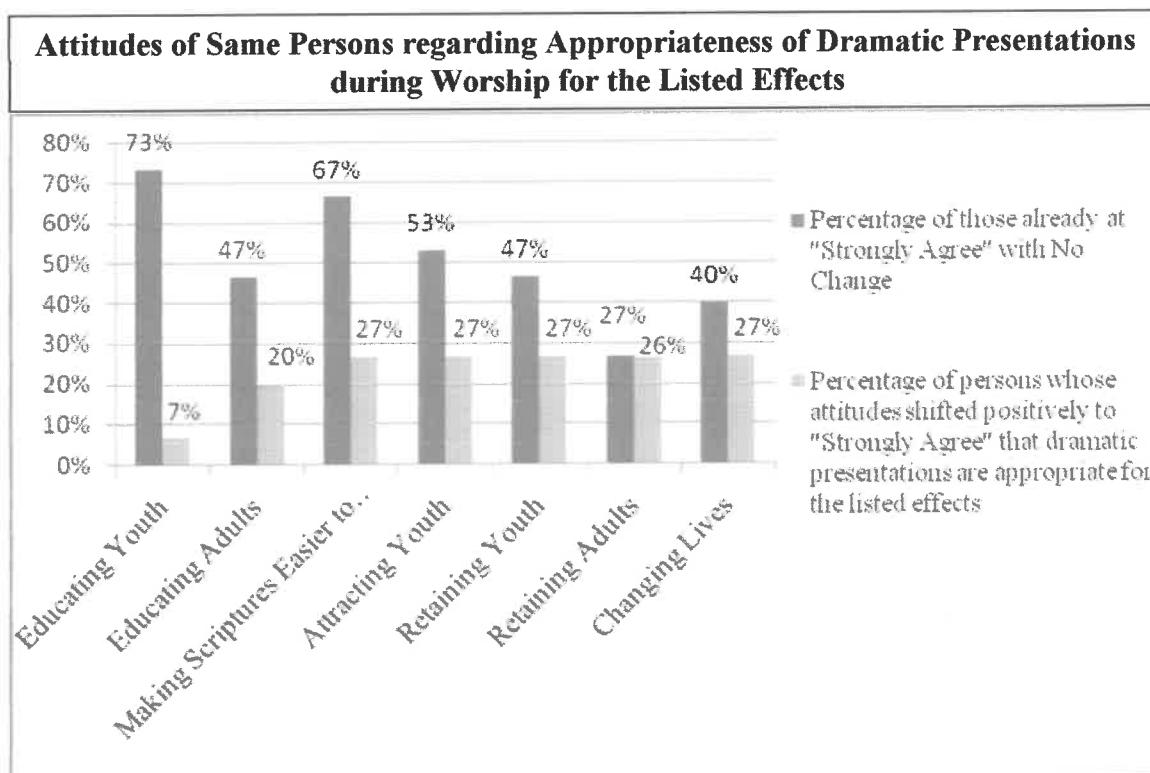


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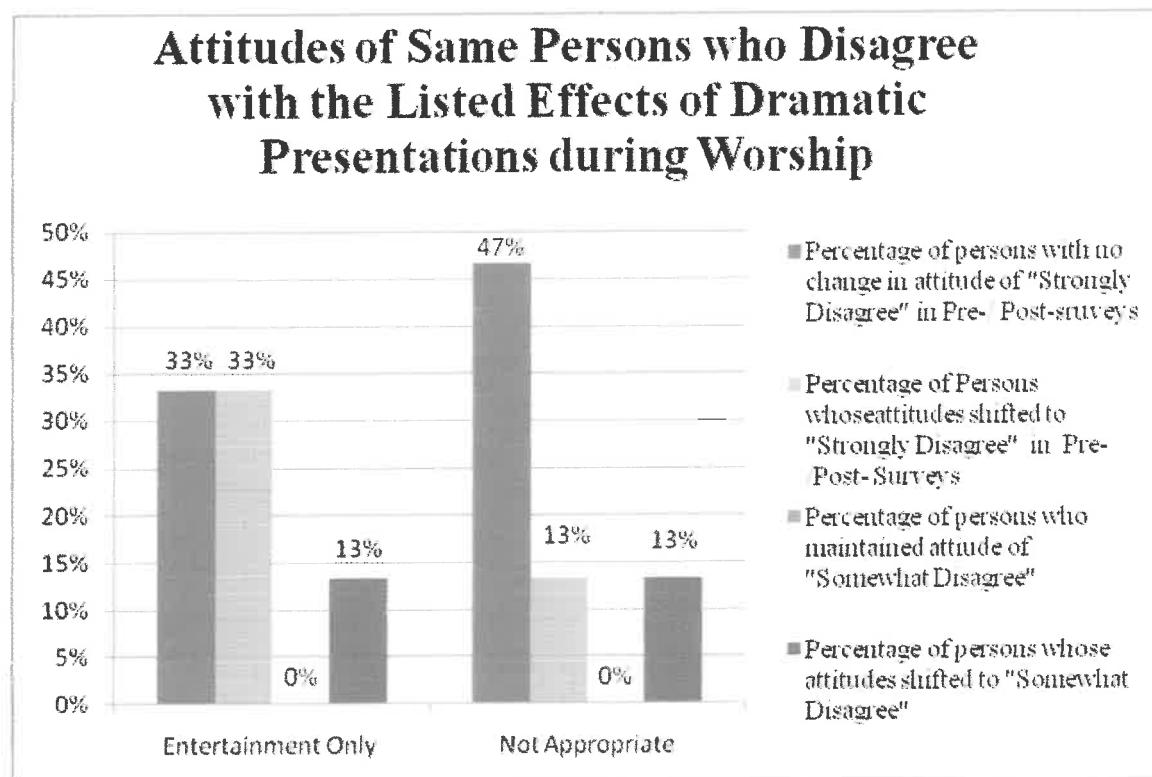


Table 33.

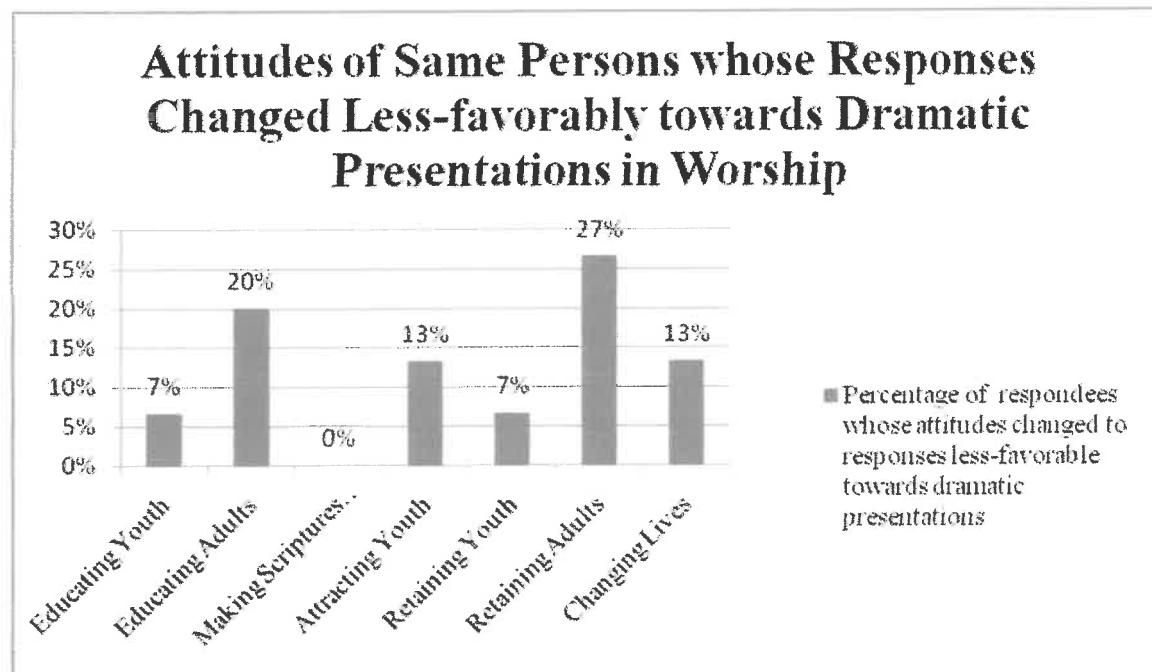


Table 34.

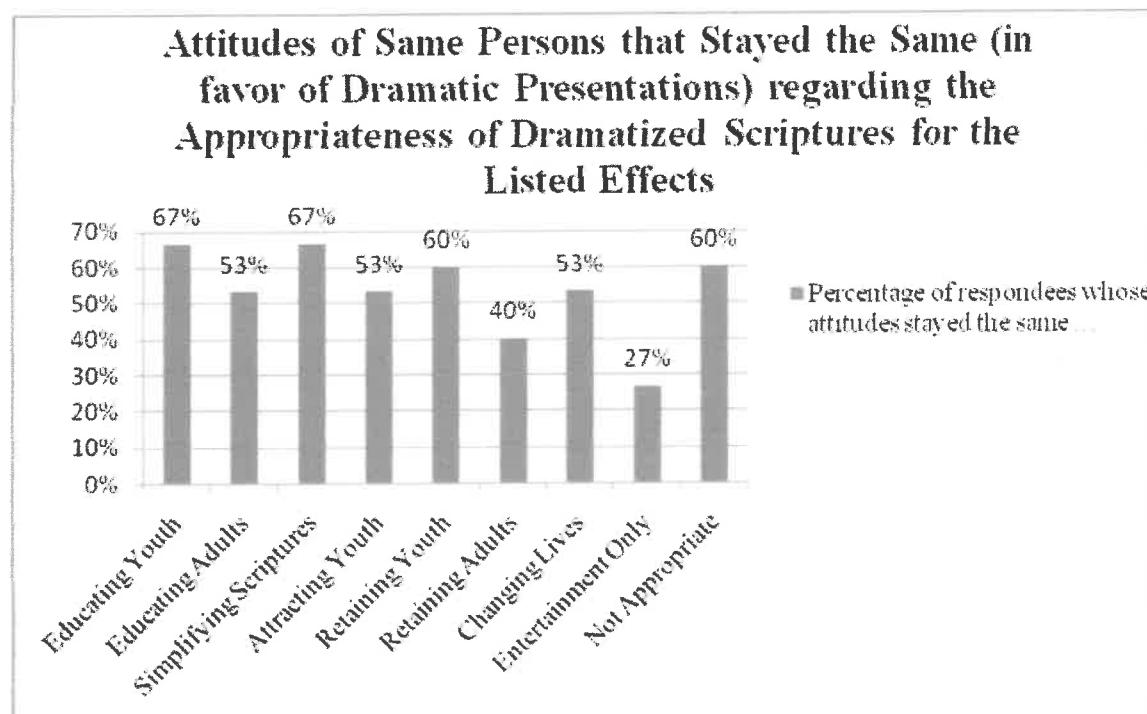


Table 35.

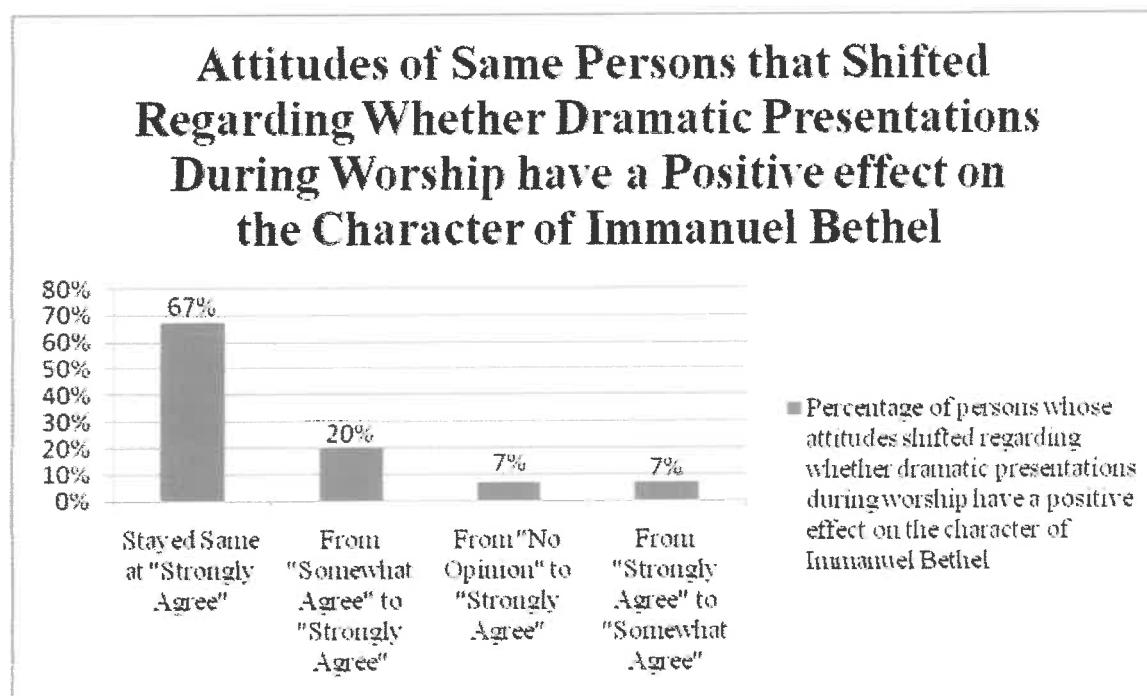


Table 36.

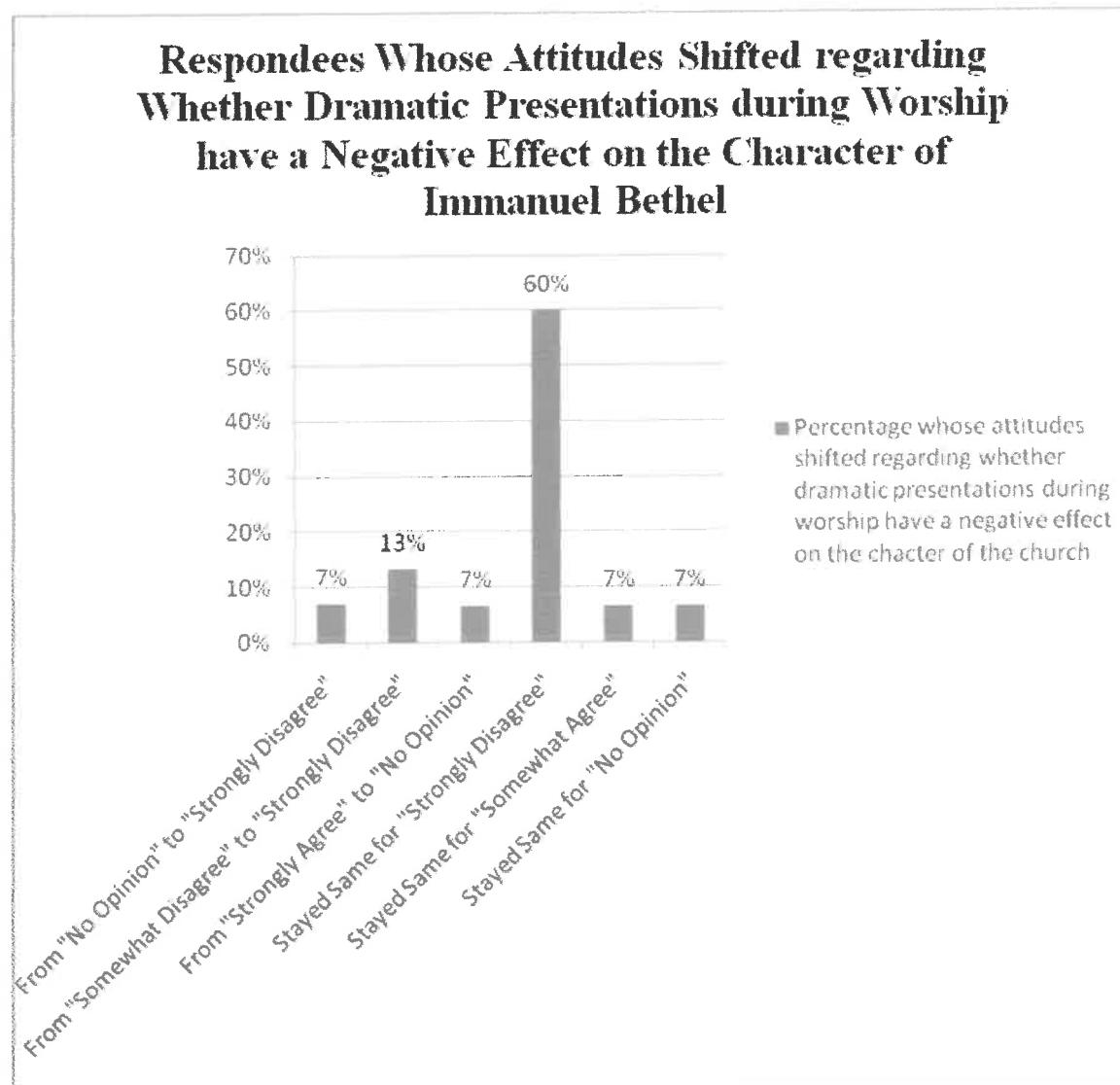
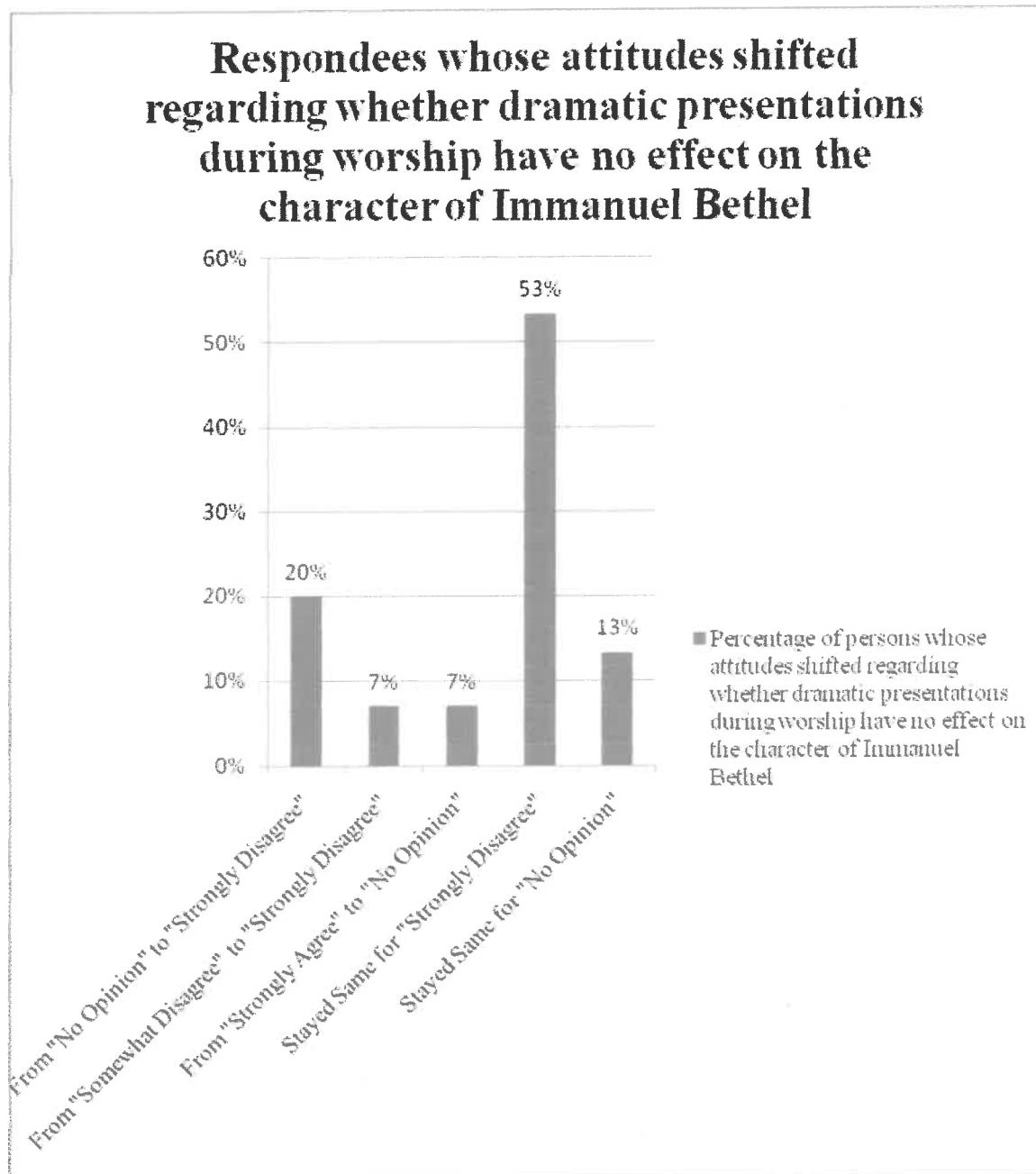


Table 37.



APPENDIX K
SERMON: TRANSFORMING LOVE
SONG: SURELY GOD IS ABLE

“Transforming Love”
Luke 19:1-10
October 31, 2010

As I stand humbly before you today, I must say that it is my belief that it is no accident that I am preaching on this fifth Sunday youth service. As most of you know, I am working on my Doctor of Ministry degree at United Theological Seminary, and my project focuses on the infusion of youth drama into worship here at Immanuel Bethel. Because most you have either completed a survey or participated as a contextual associate, you know that today is the final day of implementation of this project. My professor gave us instructions to preach on our project and God has ordained it that Youth Sunday, my normal preaching day, falls on the last day of implementation. This has indeed been enjoyable learning experience for me, and I pray it has been one for all who have participated, as well. Even if you merely have been an onlooker of the weekly scriptural dramatizations, you have experienced the “bringing-to-life” of the word of God, and noticed how amazingly alive the word still remains. You have seen the value and confidence of our youth increase as they performed the biblical narratives with the purity of heart that please god do much, and the fervor with which Pastor Ray has preached, further showing us how the word, written so long ago, still applies to our lives today. We have seen after church each week, the commitment of our congregation to the development of a project that would indeed enhance the worship here at Immanuel Bethel, without taking away from the character of our worship at all. So at this time, I just want to take a moment to say “thank you” to all of our children, first, for coming so faithfully to church early every Sunday to rehearse our Scripture for the week, and second, for committing one hundred percent of themselves to their roles, even if it meant

stepping out of their comfort zones. Stand up so that you may be recognized. I love you children so much as I praise God for each for you. I want to thank all of you who have participated as contextual associates-Pastor Ray, Pastor Victor, Candi, Ellen, Jan Nelson, Jan Yehnert, Rich, Pastor Ray, Rhonda, Lynn, and Peggy. Jan and Candi, thank you so much for providing the lunches. All of you who stood in as actors--Bobbie, Jan, and Ellen, your kindness is immeasurable and I pray God's blessings upon you for giving of yourself so unselfishly. To the musicians, thank you for stepping in without warning, to give us background music. Your contribution set the atmosphere and it made a notable difference. And lastly, to the rest of the congregation, your welcome embrace of our youth and their weekly presentations are what mattered most. Had you not been willing to receive us, then the project would not have succeeded; it would have found no place here at Immanuel Bethel. Thank you so much for allowing the project and our youth a place here in worship. I praise God for all of you. Please know that there is one more survey that I will need to you to take after this worship service. And then we will be done. And now on to our sermon. Please pray with us.

There was a teen-aged girl, who was the second of six siblings. When she was young, she introduced to the church by her mother, who made sure she and her siblings were there at least on Easter, Mother's Day, and Christmas. This girl loved going to church. She was intrigued by the things she saw and about this Jesus of whom she heard, who could be all things to all people. But by the time she was in fourth grade her moved to the suburbs and without a car she ordinarily would have been unable to go to church. But there was a bus line ran two blocks from the church. So this, girl, eager to continue to go to church, got her mother's okay to catch the bus to church on Sunday mornings. Now

even though she went to church, she did not really know the Scriptures- she knew only what she'd heard the preacher say every Sunday. Nobody ever taught her what the Bible really said. She only knew bits and pieces. But she was affected so strongly by what she heard, until by the time she was eleven, she was baptized and had joined the church. She wanted to know this Jesus. She wanted to have a relationship with this Jesus that everyone talked about.

Now, while this young girl, had joined the church, again, I reiterate that nobody showed her the way to being a good Christian, as we know it. Nobody told her about Sunday school. Nobody even told her about how important it was to follow and obey the word of God. This girl just lived. As she moved into her teen-age years, she became rebellious, as teen-agers often do; and she was always at odds with her mother. She must have run away from home two or three times, staying at the houses of friends, because she and her mother did not get along. Now mind you, this girl was a good student in high school. She took college level course and was actually on the college track in her coursework. But nobody ever took her hand and showed her the way. "Honor your father and your mother"-nobody told her that God required that and that directive was in the Bible. She knew about faith. She knew that god was there for her. So whenever she was away from home, she prayed to God to be with her. This girl became a cheerleader in high school and met some friends, friends who were not so good. One day she went with them to K-mart to buy some items they needed for the squad. While at K-mart, her friends showed her to shoplift. They got away with it and did it two or three more times after that. It was fun to the girls.

Well Christmas time rolled around and this teen-aged girl wanted to get her family some gifts. She knew a way to do so. She had saved up her allowance, as she did every year, and so she had the money to purchase the gifts; but she knew a way she could get them for free. She could do what her friends had taught her. So she put on her cheerleader jacket and went to K-mart carrying a huge purse, and she slipped her mom and dad's colognes in her purse. Suddenly, she heard a voice. "Excuse me, ma'am, keep your hands by your side and follow the gentleman in front of you." She was caught. After spending a night in jail, and having her mom and dad picked her up, this student went home, went to her bedroom and put into action the little bit she had heard in church about prayer and forgiveness. This young girl fell on her knees and prayed for what seemed like hours, for God to forgive her. She felt a disconnect from who she thought she should be as that girl who professed her love for Jesus. She told God how she did not know how wrong it was. Nobody told her. She promised God that if God forgave her, then she would never do such thing again. God indeed forgave her, the case was thrown out and the girl never, ever made that mistake again.

As you have seen, our Scripture is taken from the nineteenth chapter of Luke, verses one through ten, and it tells the story of Zacchaeus, the tax collecting sinner, known and hated for his prices gouging practices of tax assessments. Tax collectors were notorious for building their own wealth by over-taxing the people; and Zacchaeus, well he was no different from the rest and were tat hat well. One could very easily assume that Zacchaeus did not know much about God because he was such a sinful man; because we all believe that when you KNOW better, you, what? Do better. But it would be fair to say that Zacchaeus, while he did know Jesus, he knew OF Jesus. For word had spread all

over about his healing power, based on faith and more. So Zacchaeus knew that even though he did not know much, his faith meant something. So in the desperation to know Jesus, Zacchaeus joined the crowd in trying to get a glimpse of Jesus. But he was unable to—because, one, he was too short, and two, because he was too short and two sinful, the taller people deemed him unworthy and speculatively blocked his view of Jesus.

Awwww, that's just like us Christians to try and keep someone away from Jesus because of something he or she has done; which is totally opposite of what Jesus stands for. The sinners are the **VERY** people Jesus wants to encounter so that he may transform their lives. How many have strangers walked through the doors of Immanuel Bethel only to be judged by us, the representatives of Jesus, and told that we cannot help them (because we have smelled alcohol on their breaths, or know that they have sold drugs, or done drugs, or just gotten out of jail? How many times has we said, "oh we're gonna have to watch them?" What about our children? How many times have we said, "Now, they don't need to be in regular worship with us grown folks; let's give them a service of their own back there, and call it youth church. The youth are in a world of their own. They are not ready to come in here yet. They wear their pants too low, and their hair is too long. Their skirts are too short, blouses are too low, tattoos are too many, and their body piercings are offensive.

So we keep them out. We leave them to do their own thing! But that is where we falter. We have to teach them—here in the church. We have to assume the responsibility of leading them toward their transformation. It is our responsibility, church. Imagine if the girl in our story had someone to guide her in her life. She already had a longing for

God and Jesus. She would not have made those mistakes. She would have known the repercussions of shoplifting and how displeased God is with that.

The girl in our story had a thirst for Jesus, Zacchaeus had a thirst for Jesus, and our children in here today have a thirst Jesus. We must lead them toward their transformation. I believe that is exactly what we are doing as we allow them to come into our regular worship service and illuminate the word of God through dramatizations. Their transformations are occurring right before our very eyes. Ahryon and Juliette have already given their lives to Jesus and have been baptized right here. Now, Billy, Holly, and Ahryel are doing the same. They are being transformed through this ministry. Praise God.

Some of you have expressed having greater clarity of the word as a result of this drama ministry of our youth- a transformation is occurring even among you. As Jesus chose his house to visit, Zacchaeus experienced a transformation; for Jesus deemed him **IMPORTANT**, even as others deemed him a worthless sinner. Likewise, our youth must be shown and told that they are valued by God. They must also be taught the word of God. This project does that, also. Our youth are experiencing the word of God as it is written without frills and without dumbing it down,-- in order that they may be transformed.

One big lesson to gain from both our biblical narrative and our teenage story is that just a little bit of faith will lead you to God's grace, mercy, forgiveness, and God's affirmation of you as a human being. The girl did not know much of the word of God and made some mistakes; but God forgave her and made her whole. So, I say this to you. Just a little faith is all it takes. Just because you have done wrong it does not mean that you

cannot find favor in God's sight. That is why Jesus died on the cross and was raised on the third day, so that we sinners might believe and get a second chance. To our youth, you are precious to God. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise, because of some mistake you have made. We all make mistakes; we must repent and trust God to forgive our sins. God will do it. God is faithful and just to forgive our sins. Jesus said it himself as he spoke of his visit to Zacchaeus' house, "Today, salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and save the lost."

May God's blessings be upon each one of you.

Song: “Surely, God is Able”

Surely, surely, surely, surely
God is able to carry you through.

He's a mother for the motherless
He's a father for the fatherless.
He's a sister for the sister-less.
He's a brother for the brother-less.

Surely, surely, surely, surely,
God is able to carry you through.
Surely, surely, surely,
God is able to carry you through

He's a doctor for the doctor-less.
He's a lawyer for the lawyer-less.
He's a friend for the friend-less.
He's a helper for the helpless.

Surely, surely, surely, surely,
Surely, surely, surely, surely,
God is able to carry you through!

—Anonymous

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